



What Is MariaDB and Why You Have Probably Never Heard of It - but Use It

MariaDB runs 68% of the Joomla and WordPress sites we monitor, and half run a database release that is now end of life. Measured on live servers.

Phil E. Taylor | 2 October 2026

Robert from the MariaDB Foundation [asked r/joomla a fair question this week](#): are you running Joomla on MariaDB, or something else, and why? The post links the Foundation's [yearly database survey](#), which takes under ten minutes, and the results go up at mariadb.org/survey.

We can answer the first half of that question with measurements. Every site connected to mySites.guru reports its database server and version in each [snapshot](#), twice a day. Across the Joomla and WordPress sites we monitor, **68% run MariaDB and 32% run MySQL**. The "why" is short: almost nobody chose their database, and almost nobody cares which one they got.

MariaDB vs MySQL on Joomla and WordPress sites

MariaDB runs 70.7% of the Joomla sites we monitor and 59.1% of the WordPress sites.

MySQL has the rest. These figures come from the version string each database server returns, read from connected sites that took a snapshot in the last 90 days. We publish percentages only, and site counts stay private.

Platform	MariaDB	MySQL
Joomla	70.7%	29.3%
WordPress	59.1%	40.9%
Other PHP sites	86.7%	13.3%
All sites	68.1%	31.9%

Both CMS projects publish their own numbers, and they point the same way.

WordPress.org's database statistics currently show about 60% MariaDB, within a point of ours, a crossover the MariaDB Foundation wrote up in 2025. Joomla's usage statistics do not separate the two engines (both report as `mysqli`), but sorting the last 90 days by version number gives roughly 62% MariaDB.

Our Joomla figure is nine points higher than that. The likely reason is who is in the sample: Joomla's statistics come from any install that opted in, while ours come from sites someone pays to manage, and those sit on hosting that gets updated more often. The "other PHP sites" row is the weakest of the four. Most custom PHP sites don't report their database, so treat it as indicative.

What the **** is MariaDB?

That would be the reaction of most Joomla site owners to the Reddit question. Most of them have never heard of MariaDB, and they have certainly never sat down and compared its features with MySQL's. They bought hosting, ran the Joomla installer, typed in the database details the control panel gave them, and moved on. As far as they are concerned, the site has "a database", and that is the end of it.

For the record, MariaDB is a fork of MySQL started in 2009 by Michael "Monty" Widenius, one of MySQL's original authors, after Oracle moved to buy Sun Microsystems and MySQL with it. It was built as a drop-in replacement: Joomla and WordPress talk to it through the same `mysqli` driver they use for MySQL, which is exactly why a site owner never needs to know which one is underneath. The two have drifted apart since, mostly in features a CMS does not touch.

The web host made the choice

So when 68% of sites run MariaDB, the site owners did not choose that. The host did, and the host's choice is visible in the data.

The version strings show it. A database server reports the build it came from, and across Joomla sites alone we see over 700 distinct version strings. A sixth of the MariaDB servers behind Joomla sites report a `c11-lve` build, the CloudLinux packaging under much of cPanel shared hosting, and cPanel itself made MariaDB the default for new servers from version 122. Another 18% report a Debian or Ubuntu package, which is what a VPS gets when somebody types `apt install` and accepts the default. On Debian, the default MySQL-compatible server has been MariaDB for years.

The clearest evidence is in agency accounts. **58% of mySites.guru accounts with five or more sites have sites on MariaDB and MySQL at the same time.** These are people who manage sites for a living, and their portfolios are still split, because each client arrived with hosting already in place. No agency gets to standardise the database across thirty clients' hosting accounts.

The host picks the database

For a typical Joomla or WordPress site, the MariaDB vs MySQL question was settled the day someone chose a hosting plan.

That is why the “which is faster” comparisons filling the search results miss this audience. The decision a site owner controls is the host. The useful question to put to that host is which database version they run and when they plan to move off it, which matters more this year than it has for a while.

Half of all sites now run an end-of-life database

51% of the sites we monitor run a MySQL or MariaDB release that its developers no longer support.

Most of that happened in 2026. Oracle ended support for MySQL 8.0 on 30 April, and the MariaDB Foundation ended MariaDB 10.6 on 6 July. Those two versions alone run 36% of the sites we see, so a third of sites went end of life this year without anyone touching them.

Engine	Version	Share of all sites	Upstream support
MariaDB	10.11	28.1%	Until February 2028
MySQL	8.0	18.7%	Ended April 2026
MariaDB	10.6	17.4%	Ended July 2026
MariaDB	11.4	9.3%	Until May 2029
MySQL	8.4	7.8%	Until April 2029
MySQL	5.7	4.0%	Ended October 2023
MariaDB	10.5	3.8%	Ended June 2025
MariaDB	11.8	3.5%	Until June 2028
MariaDB	10.3	2.5%	Ended May 2023
MariaDB	10.4	2.1%	Ended June 2024
MySQL	5.5	1.0%	Ended December 2018
MySQL	5.6	0.4%	Ended February 2021
MariaDB	10.2	0.4%	Ended May 2022
MariaDB	12.x	0.3%	12.3 LTS until June 2029

The split by platform is close: 50.7% of Joomla sites and 52.1% of WordPress sites are on an end-of-life release.

The two platforms get there differently. On WordPress the larger part is MySQL (29.3% of sites, mostly 8.0 and 5.x), while on Joomla it is MariaDB (28.1%, mostly 10.6 plus a long tail of 10.3 to 10.5).

Why half of all sites are left on an old database

Websites are sold as a project. The build is paid for once, and what follows is a small monthly hosting fee and, if the client is lucky, a cheap maintenance plan. That recurring money is too thin to pay anyone to keep looking, so once a site goes live, nobody does. The site keeps working, the client is happy, and underneath it the PHP version, the database server and the extensions all age a little more each month. Sites are rarely abandoned in one go. They rot slowly.

The database is the clearest case, because it sits on the host's side where neither the site owner nor most agencies ever look. Nothing on the site changes when MySQL 8.0 or MariaDB 10.6 goes out of support. No error appears, no email arrives, and the admin dashboard looks exactly as it did the day before. You only find out if something is watching.

That is the job mySites.guru does. Every connected site takes a [snapshot](#) twice a day, which records its CMS, PHP and database versions, and the dashboard flags [end-of-life Joomla, WordPress and PHP versions](#) across every site you manage. The compatibility pages below grade each site's database too, so the slow rot shows up as a list of hosts to chase instead of a surprise during the next major upgrade. For an agency, that list is also the case for a maintenance plan worth paying for: you can show a client exactly what has aged on their site since launch. You can [try it on your own sites](#) or start with a [free audit](#).

Some end-of-life servers still get patches

A server running the MySQL 8.0 or MariaDB 10.6 package from a supported Linux distribution may still get security fixes from that distribution, so those two need checking host by host. The 14.4% of sites on MySQL 5.x or MariaDB 10.5 and older have no such cover: those releases are years past any support.

There is one more catch for anyone hoping to move off MySQL 8.0 to MariaDB. A dump exported from MySQL 8 uses the `utf8mb4_0900_ai_ci` collation, which MariaDB only accepts from 11.4.5 onwards. Import it into anything older and the restore fails with "Unknown collation".

Is your database ready for Joomla 6 and WordPress 7?

Joomla 6 enforces a database minimum of MySQL 8.0.13 or MariaDB 10.4, according to the [Joomla technical requirements](#), and recommends MySQL 8.4 or MariaDB 12. **9.9% of the Joomla sites we monitor are below that minimum** and cannot update to Joomla 6 until their host upgrades the database. Our [Joomla 6 technical requirements post](#) covers the full list.

WordPress is far more forgiving. The [WordPress requirements page](#) still accepts MySQL or MariaDB 5.5.5, and WordPress 7.0 left that floor alone while raising the PHP minimum. What WordPress recommends is a different matter: the [hosting handbook for 7.0](#) lists MySQL 8.4 and MariaDB 10.11, 11.4 or 11.8, and its supported list stops at MySQL 8.4 and MariaDB 10.6. The [WordPress 7 hosting check](#) explains how we grade that.

See each site's database at once

The Joomla 6 and WordPress 7 compatibility pages in mySites.guru list every connected site with its PHP and database version, colour-coded against that release's requirements. Filtering by database type or version shows which host each problem sits on.

If you [manage multiple Joomla sites](#) or [multiple WordPress sites](#), that page is the shortest route to a list of hosts to email. We track [end-of-life CMS and PHP versions](#) the same way.

Newer sites lean further towards MariaDB

The newer the CMS version on a site, the more likely it sits on MariaDB. Joomla 3 sites run MariaDB about two thirds of the time, Joomla 6 sites more than three quarters of the time, and WordPress shows the same slope.

CMS version	On MariaDB
Joomla 3	66.9%
Joomla 5	72.4%
Joomla 6	76.5%
WordPress 6	51.3%
WordPress 7	60.3%

A site on the latest CMS release is usually on a host that has updated its stack recently, and hosts that update are mostly moving to MariaDB. We left Joomla 4 out of the table: one large account holds a fifth of the Joomla 4 sites we see, all on MySQL, which tips that row on its own. With the ten largest accounts removed, Joomla 4 sits at 56.5% MariaDB and the other rows move by a few points at most.

What about vector search in MariaDB 11.8?

The Reddit post also asked whether anyone has done anything with vectors. [MariaDB Vector](#) became generally available in [MariaDB 11.8 LTS](#) in June 2025, with a **VECTOR** column type, vector indexes and distance functions built into the server.

Why would Joomla users even be interested in vector search in MariaDB 11.8?

Vector search finds content by meaning rather than by matching words. Each article, product or support answer is turned into a list of numbers (an embedding) by an AI model, and the database stores those numbers in a **VECTOR** column. A visitor's query gets the same treatment, and **VEC_DISTANCE_COSINE()** returns the rows whose meaning sits closest to it. Someone searching for "cancel my subscription" finds the

article titled “Ending your membership”, which a keyword search such as Joomla’s Smart Search would usually miss.

On a Joomla site that could mean:

- site search that understands synonyms and badly worded questions
- “related articles” and “similar products” chosen by content, not by shared tags
- a support chatbot that answers from the site’s own articles, with the content and its embeddings in the Joomla database instead of a separate vector service

For ordinary hosting, the last point is the big one. Until now, AI search features have meant paying for an external vector database and syncing content to it. With MariaDB 11.8 the vectors live in the same database as `#__content`, backed up with it and moved with it. You still need an AI model to create the embeddings, so it is not free, but it removes a whole extra service from the setup.

Only 3.9% of the sites we monitor are on MariaDB 11.8 or newer, so almost no Joomla or WordPress site can use it yet. We found no Joomla extension that uses it. On the WordPress side, Automattic has an experimental [native vector database plugin](#) on GitHub that supports MariaDB 11.7 and later, but it is not in the plugin directory. Vector search inside the CMS database is waiting on hosts, the same as everything else in this post.

How we counted

All figures here come from the database version reported by sites connected to mySites.guru that completed a snapshot in the last 90 days, read on 2 October 2026. Disabled sites and sites that report no database version are excluded.

Classifying the engine from a version string needs two corrections. MariaDB 10.x reports itself as `5.5.5-10.x.y`, a prefix added so old MySQL clients would accept a version number starting with 10. MariaDB [removed it in 11.0](#), so we strip it before reading the version. Some MariaDB 11 and 12 servers return a bare number with no

"MariaDB" in it, so we count any major version of 10 or above as MariaDB. MySQL has never shipped a version 10.

Take the MariaDB survey

The MariaDB Foundation's [2026 database survey](#) is open until mid-October. Last year's [State of MariaDB report](#) drew 275 responses, so each Joomla and WordPress developer who answers moves the result. If you run sites on MariaDB, or avoid it on purpose, they want to hear why.

"My host installed it" is a perfectly good answer to the survey's "why". Judging by the sites we monitor, it is probably the most common one.

Further Reading

- [MariaDB Database Survey 2026](#) - the Foundation's announcement, with the survey open until mid-October
- [State of MariaDB 2025](#) - last year's survey results
- [Joomla usage statistics](#) - opt-in data from Joomla installs, including database version
- [WordPress database statistics](#) - the live MySQL and MariaDB version breakdown from WordPress.org
- [endoflife.date: MySQL](#) and [MariaDB](#) - support dates for every release line
- [Joomla technical requirements](#) - minimum, supported and recommended database versions for Joomla 6

Frequently Asked Questions

Do most Joomla sites run MariaDB or MySQL?

MariaDB. Across the Joomla sites connected to mySites.guru, 70.7% run MariaDB and 29.3% run MySQL. Joomla's own public statistics point the same way, at roughly 62% MariaDB once versions are classified by number.

Do most WordPress sites run MariaDB or MySQL?

MariaDB, by a smaller margin than Joomla. 59.1% of the WordPress sites we monitor run MariaDB and 40.9% run MySQL, which closely matches the roughly 60% MariaDB share in WordPress.org's own statistics.

Is MySQL 8.0 end of life?

Yes. Oracle ended community support for MySQL 8.0 on 30 April 2026, and the last release was 8.0.46. The supported MySQL lines are now 8.4 LTS and 9.7 LTS. MySQL 8.0 still runs 18.7% of the sites we monitor.

Is MariaDB 10.6 end of life?

Yes. MariaDB 10.6 reached community end of life on 6 July 2026, with 10.6.28 as the last release. MariaDB 10.11, 11.4, 11.8 and 12.3 are the current long-term support lines.

Can I switch my Joomla or WordPress site from MySQL to MariaDB?

Usually, but in practice it means moving to a host or server that runs MariaDB, because site owners on shared hosting cannot change the database server. The common snag is importing a MySQL 8 dump into an older MariaDB, which fails on the `utf8mb4_0900_ai_ci` collation. MariaDB 11.4.5 and later accept it.

Which MariaDB version added vector search?

MariaDB 11.8 LTS, released in June 2025, is the first long-term support release with the VECTOR data type and vector indexes. It was a preview in 11.7. Only 3.9% of the sites we monitor are on MariaDB 11.8 or newer.

Does mySites.guru show which database each site uses?

Yes. Every snapshot records the database engine and version, which appears in the site header and on the Joomla 6 and WordPress 7 compatibility pages, where each site's

database is colour-coded against that release's requirements.

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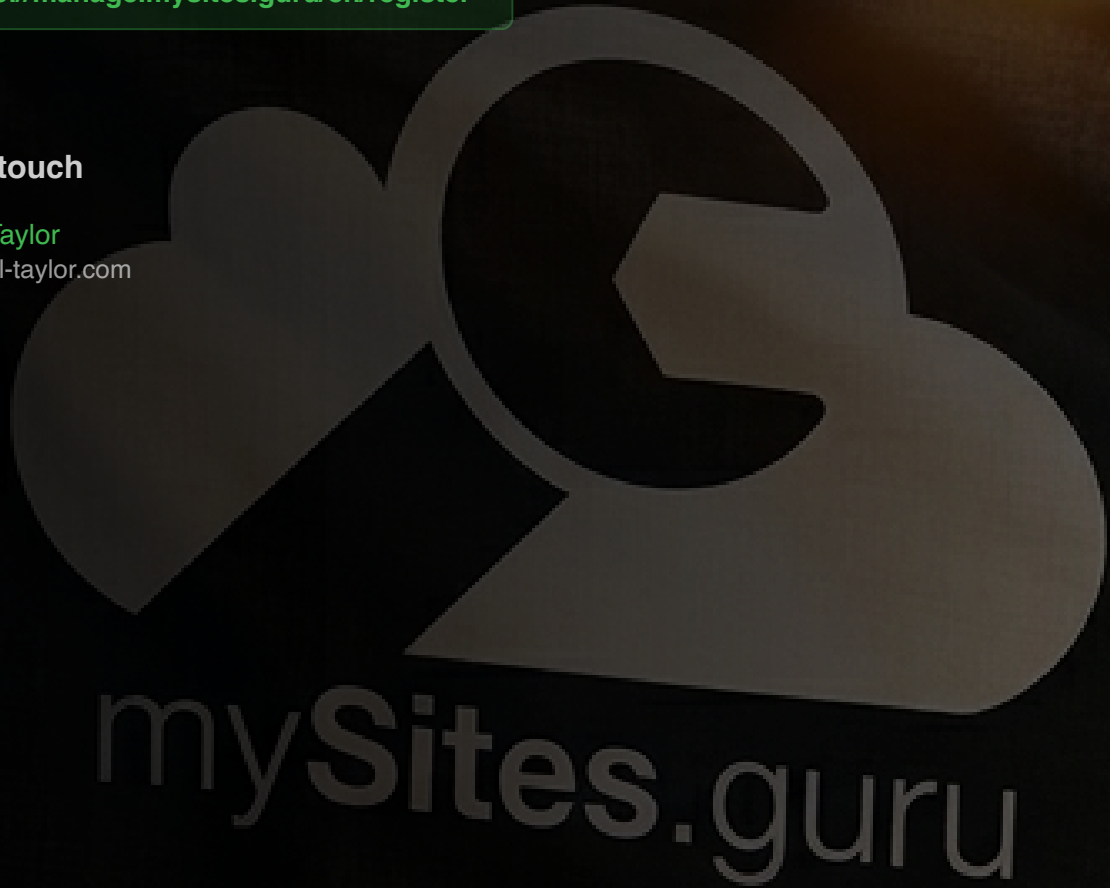
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