



Getting the Most From Your Oracle Database Support

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Executive Summary

With more than 300,000 installs, Oracle is recognized as the leading database even among SAP customers. It is mature, stable, and more than supports your business requirements. There are typically few issues, so your support tickets with Oracle are most likely rare.

However, there are several pain points for many Oracle Database customers. First is total cost of ownership (TCO) — including the high cost of operating, maintaining, and upgrading the database. Secondly, Oracle Database customers are constantly concerned about performance, availability, and security.¹ And finally, the limitations of Oracle's support policies for Oracle Database in a virtualized environment have caused many companies not to virtualize Oracle Database.

This white paper summarizes the Oracle Lifetime Support Policy for Oracle Technology products (including its policy on supporting a virtualized Oracle Database), analyzes the strategic roadmap for customers using specific releases of Oracle Database under Oracle annual support, and concludes with actionable recommendations for Oracle Database licensees. Major points:

- There is limited return on investment (ROI) in upgrading from today's feature-rich database releases.
- You can save significant funds by leveraging independent support to reduce maintenance fees and related costs.
- Your current Oracle Database release can run your operations for decades to come.
- Independent support can help you reduce risk and leave options open for new technologies.

Independent support from Rimini Street replaces Oracle support for your Oracle Database, enabling you to save 50% annually and up to 90% on your total vendor support fees over a decade, including the avoidance of expensive forced upgrades.

Oracle Database licensees are choosing independent support from Rimini Street for substantial cost savings, guaranteed ultra-responsive support, premium features, and reduced risk — and because today, hundreds of world-class organizations have already validated that independent support is a proven option.

¹ 2019 IOUG Database in the Cloud Survey.

Oracle Lifetime Support Policy

Oracle has standardized its support policies across many different organically developed and acquired product lines. This policy is known today as the Oracle Lifetime Support Policy,² and it sets consistent support policies, prices, and timelines for most Oracle products. While standardization has its benefits, Oracle is reluctant to negotiate any exceptions to or deviations from its standard Lifetime Support Policy.

Oracle's standard Lifetime Support Policy has three phases:

- Premier Support: Oracle's standard support, typically lasting for five years from general availability (GA) at a cost of 22% of your license fee and often accompanied by annual increases with each renewal.
- Extended Support: Increase of 10% in Year 1 over the cost of Premier Support, plus an additional 20% in Years 2 and 3; limited bug fixes, with lower commitment to interoperability updates and third-party platform certifications. Extended Support lasts for three years following the end of Premier Support and is not always offered.
- Sustaining Support: Fixes, updates, and critical patch updates (CPUs) created during the Premium Support phase. Sustaining Support specifically excludes new updates, fixes, security alerts, data fixes, CPUs, and new product certifications. The cost is 22% of your original license fee and lasts indefinitely.

Oracle Virtualization Support Policy

Although Oracle says it provides support for a virtualized database with third-party vendors, the reality is less convincing. Oracle states: "If Oracle identifies the underlying issue is not caused by Oracle's products or is being run in a computing environment not supported by Oracle, Oracle will refer customers to VMware for further assistance and Oracle will provide assistance to VMware as applicable in resolving the issue."³ This can result in finger-pointing among vendors, with customers not receiving the support they need — or refraining from moving their databases to a virtual machine.



"Rimini Street has been demonstrating its competitiveness by offering robust and responsive database support along with cost saving benefits. On the basis of the partnership that has begun with Rimini Street, we will work to actively push forward innovation and offer greater value to our customers."

Bumtae Lee,
General Manager,
Cloud Infra Technology Group
Hyundai-Kia Motors



HYUNDAI

² Oracle Corporation, Oracle Lifetime Support Policy, Oracle Technology Products, June 2020.

³ <https://blogs.vmware.com/apps/2019/10/oracle-on-vmware-support-policy-changes-oct-9-2019-metalink-note-249212-1.html>

Oracle Database Release Analysis

Release	GA Date	Premier Support Ends	Extended Support Ends	Sustaining Support Ends
8.1.7	Sep 2000	Dec 2004	Dec 2006	Indefinite
9.2	Jul 2002	Jul 2007	Jul 2010	Indefinite
10.1	Jan 2004	Jan 2009	Jan 2012	Indefinite
10.2	Jul 2005	Jul 2010	Jul 2013	Indefinite
11.1	Aug 2007	Aug 2012	Aug 2015	Indefinite
11.2.0.3 and earlier	Sep 2009	11.2.0.3 and earlier will no longer receive bug fixes, patches, CPU/SPUs, PSUs, or BPs per Oracle Terminal Patch Policy*		Indefinite
11.2.0.4	Sep 2009	Jan 2015	Dec 2020**	Indefinite
12.1.0.1	Jun 2013	12.1.0.1 no longer receives bug fixes, patches, CPU/SPUs, PSUs, or BPs per Oracle Terminal Patch Policy*		Indefinite
12.1.0.2	Jun 2013	Jul 2018	Jul 2022	Indefinite
12.1 SE and SE1	Jun 2013	Aug 2016	Not available	Indefinite
12.1 SE2	Sep 2015	Jul 2018	Jul 2022	Indefinite
12.2.0.1	Mar 2017	Nov 2020	Limited to Severity 1 production fixes and security fixes per Oracle Error Correction Policy through March 31, 2022*	Indefinite
12.2.0.2 (18c)	Jul 2018	Jun 2021	Not available	Indefinite
12.2.0.3 (19c)	Apr 2019	Mar 2024	Apr 2027	Indefinite

Figure 1: Oracle Database Support Dates by Release Source: Oracle Lifetime Support Policy, Coverage for Oracle Technology Products, June 2020.

*<https://mikedietrichde.com/2018/07/30/clarification-support-periods-for-oracle-12-2-0-1-and-18c/>

**Market Driven Support for 11.2.0.4 available at an extra cost for only Severity 1

Oracle Database 11.1 and Earlier Releases

If you use Oracle Database 11.1 or a prior release, you're already on Sustaining Support and therefore no longer receiving full support (along with users of Oracle 12.1 Standard Edition and Oracle 12.1 Standard Edition 1). Many users refer to this stage as "de-support." 74% of Oracle Database customers have some instances that receive Sustaining Support.⁴

Amazingly, Oracle customers are still paying 22% simply for old patches and fixes. Users of Oracle Database 11.1 and earlier releases should consider the following important points:

- You are limited to Sustaining Support and yet are probably quite happy with the database itself. Twenty-two percent of your original license fees go to a support offering that doesn't provide CPUs or even attempt to address new fixes for your issues; this delivers practically no value.
- Upgrading to Oracle Database 19c is very complicated, and apart from offering the questionable benefit of multitenancy, 19c delivers little business value. Upgrading to 19c from release levels 8, 9, and 10.1 is a complex two-step process, requiring the intermediate stage of an upgrade to 11g. Rimini Street recommends postponing an upgrade to 19c until you really need the functionality.

⁴Rimini Street Survey Report, "The Hidden Truths about Oracle Database Support," 2017.

Oracle Database 11.2 12c, 18c and 19c Releases

Oracle Database 11g is widely considered to be a very solid product, offering robust functionality and very few issues. There are factors to consider regarding the 11.2 patch sets noted below:

Important considerations for 12.1.0.1, 11.2.0.3 and earlier patch set customers:

- If you are running 11.2.0.3 or earlier patch sets, you are in a similar situation to release 11.1. While technically not in Sustaining Support, this release has limited coverage according to the Oracle “Error Correction Policy.” Specifically, no bug fixes, no patches, no CPU/SPUs, no PSUs, and no BPs have been produced since August 28, 2015.⁵
- 12.1.0.1 is in a similar situation superseded by 12.1.0.2 and no longer receives bug fixes, patches, security updates or alerts based on Oracle’s terminal patch policy.
- This means that while you continue to pay full price for your maintenance fees you have only access only to old fixes and are at risk of jeopardizing operations for any new issues.

Important considerations for 11.2.0.4, 12.2.0.1, and 18c customers customers:

In the face of business disruption and economic uncertainty, the last thing you’d want is unnecessary spending. Unfortunately, for those running Oracle Database, 2020 could be full of unwanted costs. Here’s why:

By the end of 2020, 94% of Oracle Database customer instances will be on Oracle Sustaining Support,⁶ which means:

- No new updates, fixes, security alerts, data fixes, and critical patch updates
- No new upgrade scripts
- No certification with new Oracle or third-party products/versions⁷
- 11.2.0.4 will enter Oracle Sustaining Support at the end of December 2020
- 12.2.0.1 will enter Oracle Sustaining Support at the end of November, 2020 (Oracle has announced a Limited Error Correction period until March 31, 2022⁸ which only covers Severity 1 fixes and security).
- 18c is designated a “Short-term Release” by Oracle⁹ and has enjoyed limited uptake. And as a Short-term Release, full support will be discontinued June 2021.
- For any of these releases of 18c or earlier, you should consider the following:
 - Upgrading is a complex process. Before you walk down that path, you should independently verify the ROI you anticipate by upgrading.

⁵<https://mikedietrichde.com/2018/07/30/clarification-support-periods-for-oracle-12-2-0-1-and-18c/>

⁶94% as of June 1, 2019 – <https://www.brightworkresearch.com/oracle/2019/06/01/what-percentage-of-oracle-customers-are-on-what-oracle-database-version/>

⁷Lifetime Support Policy, Coverage for Oracle Technology Products June, 2020

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.



“The packaged software maintenance model is broken. Don’t reward software vendors for it by staying on their upgrade treadmill at their arbitrary 18 or 22 percent a year of software ‘license value.’ ... ”

Vinnie Mirchandani
Deal Architect



“Why switch to Rimini Street Support? It works. It’s smooth. It’s a huge nonevent. And you get robust support. You take the driver’s seat, and you save money. It’s almost too good to be true.”

*Mark Wikingstad,
Chief Information Officer
UCI International*

Can you provide your board with a solid business case for upgrading, based on data and assumptions that are not provided by Oracle? Many will struggle with how to develop a strong business case, but this is a crucial step. Due diligence is required when deciding to move forward with an upgrade, because it can otherwise limit your ability and resources to focus on more strategic issues.

Additionally, if you choose to move away from Oracle Support, the most current release and patch sets, can be archived, giving you the ability to upgrade if and when it makes good business sense.

Important considerations for 19c customers

19c is the release Oracle is counting on for widespread adoption, the latest and greatest. If you are already running 19c, consider the following:

- Check your tickets for Oracle Database support. How often do you actually need support? You may consider Oracle Support an insurance policy, but is the high cost of that policy really worth it?
- If you’re already using 19c, you should be very content for the next five years or more. It is unlikely Oracle will release any new functionality that will be critical and provide an ROI for your business.

A note about Autonomous Database functionality

In spite of the hype surrounding Oracle’s introduction of the “Autonomous Database,” 18c and 19c are not autonomous. An “Autonomous Database is a Cloud service running on top of Oracle Database 18c [and 19c] along with additional services to provide performance and availability SLAs.”¹⁰

- **Autonomous functionality:** only available as a subscription on Autonomous Database Cloud Service on Oracle Public Cloud or Oracle Cloud@Customer.
- **Vendor lock-in:** once on Oracle Cloud, your options are limited particularly around support. You will be locked in to the high cost of Oracle maintenance and cloud services.
- **Limited features:** “Not all features present in Oracle Database Enterprise Edition are available in ADB”¹¹ (Autonomous Database).
- **Limited platform and infrastructure:** not available in all regions.¹²

¹⁰ <https://sqlmaria.com/2017/11/02/oracle-autonomous-database/>

¹¹ <https://www.oracle.com/database/technologies/datawarehouse-bigdata/adb-faqs.html>

¹² <https://www.oracle.com/cloud/data-regions.html>

Options Oracle Database Licensees Should Consider on All Releases

Continue to pay 22% or more for support that is seldom used — and is potentially of little value if you are on Sustaining Support.

Switch to independent support — As a Rimini Street client, you are assigned a named Primary Support Engineer (PSE) who will respond to every critical support request in 10 minutes or less. (Actual average response time is less than five minutes.) Our PSEs work closely with a team of Oracle Database technical and functional experts. This ultra-responsive service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. With Rimini Street, you also retain the option of upgrading at a later date to the most current release you're entitled to at the time you leave — but you'll upgrade only if and when it makes sense for your business, not just because upgrading is high on Oracle's agenda for your strategic roadmap. Move away from Oracle Database to an open source database like PostgreSQL.

Key Advantages of Independent Support

Licensees who switch to Rimini Street Support for Oracle Database enjoy the following benefits:

- **Cost savings:** Save 50% over Oracle annual support fees and remain on your current database release for as long as you wish — five, ten, fifteen years, or more.
- **Deep expertise:** The Rimini Street program for Oracle Database licensees includes support for all aspects and components of the Oracle Database product including:
 - Active Data Guard
 - Application Express
 - Data Masking
 - Database Diagnostics and Configuration
 - Database Vault
 - Enterprise Manager
 - In-Memory Database Cache
 - OLAP
 - Partitioning
 - Performance Tuning
 - Real Application Clusters (RAC)
 - Warehouse Builder
- **Expert database advisory services at no additional charge:** With independent support from Rimini Street, you receive expert consultation from our Strategic Support Services experts around best practices, configurations, and hardware. This helps ensure interoperability, security, and optimal system performance.
- **Database virtualization support:** Regardless of where the issue lies, Rimini Street will work with you to diagnose the problem and determine a solution — without finger-pointing.

Oracle Database Client Snapshot:

Global Logistics Company

Industry: Transportation/
Distribution

Revenue: \$2 Billion

Employees: 3,700

**Oracle Database 8.1, 9.2, 10.2,
and 11.2**

The company selected Rimini Street to support its Oracle Database and reduce its annual support fees by 50%.

Expert diagnosis of performance problem areas, root cause analysis, and action plans to restore system performance at no extra charge are a huge benefit for the company as its system usage grows. In addition, savings allowed it to reallocate funds and resources to more strategic initiatives.



"We took the money that we had budgeted for Oracle support and were able to leverage that to help us build cool new applications to keep our existing clients happy and aggressively attract new customers."

**Executive Director IT Global
Infrastructure and Support,
Global logistics company**



“The switch to Rimini Street was a tremendous advantage for us, especially reducing our IT costs, and I am glad we made that decision as quickly as we did.”

This is the first time I have worked with a supplier where all the employees are fully committed to enabling our business to grow with the same level of enthusiasm as our job sites.”

Kenji Tomooka,
Managing Executive Officer and CIO,
Fujitec

FUJITEC

- **Tailored, holistic approach to security:** Seventy-four percent of Oracle Database users say they are at least one CPU cycle behind.¹³ CPU cycles last six months to a year or more, before a patch is actually applied — and that’s after Oracle finally releases the patch. Some vulnerabilities are never patched by Oracle. Companies relying on CPUs are vulnerable. Rimini Street can guide you in applying a holistic approach to security to keep your database secure without constant patching.
- **Option to upgrade to the current Oracle Database version at a later date:** When you switch to Rimini Support for Oracle Database, you can upgrade if and when it makes sense for your business, because we work with you to scope and archive the updates, patches, scripts, documentation, and files that you need to upgrade.

The Software Vendor Support Model Is Expensive and Dated

Fairness and Relevance of Vendor Support Model Questioned

The big software vendors have enjoyed a virtual monopoly on support services for their products. With today’s 90% profit margins on support operations, for every 10 dollars you pay a vendor, the vendor spends only one dollar on actual support. Organizations are coming to the conclusion that the vendor support model is at best dated — and at worst obsolete and grossly unfair to the enterprise software licensee.

And industry analysts agree: You may be spending too much on enterprise software annual support and receiving limited value in return. Ongoing maintenance and operational costs typically consume the majority of all IT budgets, with only 10% available for business transformation initiatives.¹⁴

High-Cost, Low-Value Maintenance Expenses Limit Innovation

IT Spending Categories*

90%

Ongoing Operations and Enhancements



10%

Business Transformation Initiatives

¹³ IOUG – DBA—SECURITY SUPERHERO, 2014 IOUG Enterprise Data Security Survey.

¹⁴ Gartner, “Gartner IT Key Metrics Data, 2018 IT Enterprise Summary Report,” December 2019.

Oracle Database Security Concerns

Oracle's traditional patching model is considered by many to be dated and ineffective because patches can be incomplete, late to be published, and slow to be applied, leaving enterprise systems vulnerable for months — sometimes even years. In fact, many companies only patch once per year during a holiday — if at all — due to the massive downtime and manpower associated with applying vendor software patches.

As mentioned earlier, the majority of customer database instances are, or will soon be, in Oracle Sustaining Support with no security updates provided — an Oracle Database survey showed 74% of Oracle Database licensees have instances that are no longer receiving Oracle security patches from the vendor.¹⁵

In addition, according to the Aberdeen Group,¹⁶ issues with traditional vendor patching include:

- **Delayed patch availability:** There is often a significant lag time between the public disclosure of a vulnerability and the availability of a patch from the vendor, which can leave many enterprise systems vulnerable for months.
- **Limited Scope:** Forty-two percent of known vulnerabilities were not addressed by vendor patching within a year.
- **Burdensome:** The amount of time required and business disruption created in applying vendor-delivered security patches leads many organizations to delay or forgo applying patches altogether.
- **Costly:** Research data highlights that for a mid-size company with 100 database instances, the traditional vendor security patching model has a median business cost of around \$4 million.

Virtual patching solutions like *Rimini Street Advanced Database Security*, provide database licensees with faster time-to-protect the database compared to traditional software vendor patching. Virtual patching is often more comprehensive, more effective, faster, safer, and easier to apply than traditional vendor patching. It provides organizations faster time-to-protection against vulnerabilities and a more cost-effective solution, without any need to impact production systems.



Virtual Patching is a policy enforcement point external to the resource being protected, that identifies and intercepts exploits of vulnerabilities before they reach their target. It is a very effective compensating control.

*Virtual Patching and Database Security:
An Effective Compensating Control*
Aberdeen Group, 2013

¹⁵ Rimini Street Survey Report, "The Hidden Truths about Oracle Database Support," 2017.

¹⁶ Aberdeen Group, "Beyond the Patch: Reducing the Risk of Database and Application Vulnerabilities," October 2016; and Aberdeen Group, "Virtual Patching and Database Security: An Effective Compensating Control," April 2013.

Next Steps: You Have a Choice of Support Providers

A Better Option: Oracle Database Licensees Realize Value with Rimini Street

Hundreds of world-class organizations are exercising their right to select the annual support provider that best meets their needs and fits their budget.

Independent support from Rimini Street replaces your annual support program from the vendor. Rimini Street provides premium support so you can continue to run your Oracle Database cost effectively for the next decade or longer with no required upgrades. Oracle Database licensees choose independent support from Rimini Street for:

- **Substantial cost savings:** Rimini Street offers guaranteed savings of 50% over vendor annual support fees.
- **Ultra-responsive, relevant, cutting-edge service model:** Rimini Street delivers guaranteed ultra-responsive support and premium features such as support for security, interoperability, and performance support — all at no additional cost.
- **Greater strategic flexibility:** Rimini Street can help you avoid costly upgrades; extend the life of your current, stable database release; and reduce risk as you position yourself for the next proven technology platform.

Calculate your savings: 50 percent off annual support fees is just the tip of the iceberg. Upgrade avoidance and maintenance efficiencies deliver other savings that can be easily calculated for your company by going to www.riministreet.com/savings-calculator.

Many organizations use independent support as a key aspect of their application strategy, reallocating the savings from independent support to address real business problems involving their systems, while evaluating new technologies at their own pace — not according to a vendor's release timeline and agenda.

Database Licensees

Gartner has recently stated “third-party support is no longer seen as out of the ordinary or as carrying more than an acceptable risk. More buyers are aware of the value-added offerings from third-party support providers, such as custom-code support, interoperability support, and global tax, regulatory and security services.”¹⁷

This paper has pointed out the very real issues around using vendor support: expense, less-than-optimal responsiveness, and forced upgrades. Rather than going that route, you may want to consider Rimini Street independent support because it offers the following undeniable benefits.

- Save 50% on annual support fees.
- Maximize the value of current releases. Extend the longevity of your stable and established database and avoid an upgrade with no business value. And know that you can upgrade your Oracle Database to the most current version as of the time you leave the vendor under Rimini Street Support if you wish.
- Use your savings from independent support. Address real business problems around your system, such as ongoing innovation and ever-changing business requirements.
- Improve database security. Protect databases from known and unknown vulnerabilities by monitoring and analyzing database memory and blocking attempted attacks with virtual patching before they reach the database.

Rimini Street also provides ultra-responsive support for Microsoft SQL Server, SAP HANA Database, SAP Sybase (SAP Adaptive Server Enterprise (ASE), SAP SQL Anywhere, SAP IQ and SAP Advantage DB Server), and IBM Db2.

To learn more about getting the most out of your Oracle Database support, let's talk at www.riministreet.com/contact-us or info@riministreet.com.

¹⁷ Gartner Predicts 2020: Negotiate Software and Cloud Contracts to Manage Marketplace Growth and Reduce Legacy Costs



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Rimini Street, Inc. (Nasdaq: RMNI) is a global provider of enterprise software products and services, the leading third-party support provider for Oracle and SAP software products, and a Salesforce® partner. The company offers premium, ultra-responsive, and integrated application management and support services that enable enterprise software licensees to save significant costs, free up resources for innovation, and achieve better business outcomes. Global Fortune 500, midmarket, public sector, and other organizations from a broad range of industries rely on Rimini Street as their trusted enterprise software products and services provider.

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