MR.PLANB FIELD GUIDE · MONITORING

Zabbix vs Checkmk vs Prometheus: Lightweight Pick Sheet

How the three compare for basic workstation and server monitoring, with 2026 Ledger scores and current versions.

Updated **2026-10-29** · Full guide: www.mrplanb.com/blog/zabbix-vs-checkmk-prometheus-lightweight-monitoring

> Zabbix offers the best balance of power, cost and flexibility. Checkmk is the fastest path to working monitoring. Prometheus is best for modern, metrics-first infrastructure. For basic Windows workstation monitoring without per-endpoint fees, Zabbix keeps coming out ahead.

79.4
Zabbix Ledger score out of 100, first of 20 platforms

73.6
Checkmk Ledger score

57.5
Prometheus Ledger score on its own

75.4
self-hosted Grafana stack score as a whole

The three compared

	Zabbix	Checkmk	Prometheus
Best for	Large or mixed estates, long-term control	Working monitoring fast	Cloud-native, containers, Kubernetes
Setup	Heavier upfront tuning	Fast, strong auto-discovery	Write configs, exporters, dashboards
Cost	No per-endpoint charge	Free Community; paid Pro and Ultimate	Free, cost moves to engineering time
Type	A platform	Convenient, abstracted	A toolkit
Ledger score	79.4	73.6	57.5
Lock-in (lower is better)	4.0 / 25	7.0 / 25	5.0 / 25

What to expect in practice

- Zabbix: default templates are thorough, sometimes aggressively so. Tune alerts early or a 30 second CPU spike will email you.
- Zabbix supports proxies for remote sites and does not charge per endpoint.
- Checkmk: install the agent, add the host, get metrics. Default alerts are less noisy. The tradeoff is flexibility when you want something custom.
- Prometheus: no central UI to guide setup. Fine in a DevOps mindset, less fine for monitoring branch office workstations.
- Grafana shows up with all three, because native dashboards are rarely enough.

Pick the right one

- [ ] Want fast setup and sane defaults? Choose Checkmk.
- [ ] Want long-term control and can tune upfront? Choose Zabbix.
- [ ] Already containerized or Kubernetes-native? Consider Prometheus with Grafana.
- [ ] Monitoring Windows workstations across sites with no per-endpoint fees? Zabbix.
- [ ] Small team, limited monitoring experience? Checkmk Community edition is a good start.
- [ ] Tempted to run all three? Picking one tool and going deep usually beats it for small teams.

Current versions (as of October 2026)

Product	Status
Zabbix 7.4	Newest release, released July 2025
Zabbix 7.0 LTS	Supported until June 2027
Zabbix 8.0 LTS	Planned for the fourth quarter of 2026
Checkmk 2.5.0	Stable, released 28 April 2026
Checkmk 2.4	Oldstable
Checkmk 2.3	Passive maintenance

Checkmk edition names in 2.5

- Community (formerly Raw): enough to start with a small Windows fleet.
- Pro (formerly Enterprise).
- Ultimate (formerly the self-hosted Cloud edition).

Sources and notes: Infrastructure Monitoring Ledger 2026 (20 platforms) · Zabbix life cycle policy and Checkmk versions pages · Zabbix, Checkmk, Prometheus and Grafana official documentation