Business Intelligence Tools Comparison

Power BI vs Tableau vs Qlik

A balanced, factual guide to help your organisation choose the right BI platform. Prepared by keyrus | sales@keyrus.co.za

The Three Platforms at a Glance

This guide compares the three leading business intelligence platforms available today. Where one tool has a genuine advantage or weakness, this is stated plainly.

Feature	Power BI	Tableau	Qlik
Owner	Microsoft	Salesforce	Qlik (private)
Best known for	Affordability and Microsoft integration	Best-in-class visualisation and UX	Associative data engine and data prep
Deployment	Azure cloud only	Cloud, on-premise, multi-cloud	Cloud, on-premise, hybrid
Entry price	$14/user/month (Pro)	$15/user/month (Viewer)	$30/user/month (Business)
Free version	Power BI Desktop (local only)	Tableau Desktop Public Edition + Tableau Public website	30-day trial only

Deployment, Environment & Free Options

Deployment Options

Feature	Power BI	Tableau	Qlik
Cloud/SaaS option	Cloud (SaaS) via Microsoft Azure only	Tableau Cloud (SaaS)	Qlik Cloud (SaaS)
On-premise option	Power BI Desktop runs on Windows only - no Mac client	Tableau Server (self-managed), on-premise or any cloud	Client-managed on-premise, hybrid deployments
Desktop client OS	Windows only	Windows and Mac	Authoring is fully browser-based - no desktop app required

Free & Trial Options

	Power BI	Tableau	Qlik
Free version	Power BI Desktop - free, full-featured for local report authoring; Power BI Free cloud license - consume content shared by Pro/PPU users, but cannot share content yourself	Tableau Desktop Public Edition - free, full-featured (announced TC 2024). Cannot connect to private/enterprise databases; Tableau Public website - free platform for public visualisations	No permanently free version for commercial use
Trial		14-day free trial of paid tiers	30-day free trial only

Academic & Non-Profit: Power BI via Microsoft 365 E5; Tableau for Students (free Desktop Public); Qlik Academic Program (free Qlik Sense Business); Qlik Cares (50% discount for non-profits).

Data Modelling, Calculation & Security

Data & Modelling Capabilities

Capability	Power BI	Tableau	Qlik
Preferred data model	Star schema (VertiPaq columnar engine)	Flat files and star schemas; flexible multi-table relationship model	Star schema; associative engine indexes all relationships automatically
Calculation language	DAX - powerful but requires learning a new language	Calculated fields - simpler syntax, sufficient for most use cases	Set Analysis and Qlik scripting - advanced but complex for new users
Data prep tool	Power Query (M language) - built in, capable for most ETL	Tableau Prep Builder - included with Creator, strong drag-and-drop	Native Qlik scripting + Talend (owned by Qlik) for enterprise ETL
Large dataset handling	1 GB limit on Pro licences. Premium/Fabric required above that.	No hard limit. Hyper engine processes data quickly.	No hard limit. Associative engine compresses and indexes large volumes.

Key insight: Power BI's 1 GB dataset limit on Pro licences is a material constraint. Fabric/Premium removes it but adds significant cost.

Security & Governance

Feature	Power BI	Tableau	Qlik
Row Level Security	Yes - RLS defined in Desktop using DAX filter rules	Yes - available on Cloud and Server; Enterprise for advanced controls	Yes - Section Access controls RLS at the app level
Data governance	Microsoft Purview integration for lineage and classification	Tableau Catalog (Enterprise) for lineage, impact analysis, certified sources	Governed libraries with standardised, reusable analytics
Collaboration	Comments, Teams integration, shared workspaces	Comments, Slack, Teams, shared content sites, subscription emails	In-app alerts, shared spaces, Qlik Cloud collaboration tools

Microsoft Teams Integration

Both Power BI and Tableau have **native Microsoft Teams integration** - this is often overlooked when comparing the two.

Feature	Power BI	Tableau	Qlik
Tab pinning / embedding	Reports and dashboards can be **pinned as tabs** inside Teams channels	Tableau dashboards can be viewed and interacted with inside Teams channels and chats	Limited native Teams integration compared to Power BI and Tableau
Interactivity in Teams	Full interaction (filtering, drill-through) without leaving Teams	Business users can consume Tableau insights without leaving their daily workflow tool	Not recommended for organisations where Teams is the primary collaboration hub
Alerts & notifications	Data alerts and notifications delivered directly into Teams	**Tableau Pulse** metric alerts and threshold notifications delivered into Teams	Limited native Teams integration compared to Power BI and Tableau
Integration depth	Deepest and most seamless Teams integration of the three tools; the Power BI app for Teams enables full report navigation within the Teams client	Closes the gap with Power BI for Teams-centric organisations	Limited native Teams integration compared to Power BI and Tableau

User Interface, Ease of Use & Visualisation

Ease of Use & Data Exploration

Feature	Power BI	Tableau	Qlik
Ease of learning	Easiest for Excel users. Familiar concepts, no coding for standard reporting. Learning DAX for advanced work takes time.	No coding required for standard visualisations. Drag-and-drop is intuitive. Widely regarded as the most intuitive of the three for visual exploration.	More technical than the others. Basic use is manageable but advanced analytics and the scripting language require real investment in learning.
Target user	Excel users	Visual analysts	Technical analysts
Dashboard exploration style	More linear, pre-determined path. Cross-filtering is dynamic, but exploration is less freeform than Tableau or Qlik.	Extremely user-friendly and interactive. Users can click any dimension and explore data visually without pre-defined paths.	Qlik's associative engine is a genuine differentiator - users can freely click any data point and see associated data highlighted or greyed out across all visuals simultaneously.
Ad hoc analysis	Supported, but more structured and guided than Tableau or Qlik.	Strong for ad hoc analysis.	Strong for ad hoc analysis through associative exploration and dynamic selection.

Visualisation & Mobile

Feature	Power BI	Tableau	Qlik
Visualisation quality	Comprehensive chart types, maps, and custom visuals. AppSource marketplace. Strong for standard business reporting.	Industry-leading. Rich chart types, animations, storytelling, data blending, and custom formatting. Most designers prefer Tableau for polished outputs.	Full range of interactive visualisations. AI assists with chart creation. Powerful for compressing and displaying large datasets visually.
Mobile app	iOS & Android; mobile-designed reports	iOS & Android; auto-optimised layouts; Tableau Pulse on mobile	Full-native mobile; touch-native; no separate mobile design step
Embedded APIs	Power BI Embedded via Azure; limited for ISV scenarios	Robust: REST, JS Embedding v3, Extensions, Metadata, VizQL, Hyper APIs	Full dashboard embedding; individual metrics surfaced independently

AI & Analytics Features

Feature	Power BI	Tableau	Qlik
AI assistant	**Copilot** (now generally available) - create reports from natural language prompts, summarise data, generate DAX, anomaly detection	**Tableau Agent** (formerly Einstein Copilot for Tableau, renamed Oct 2024) - AI assistant for building visualisations, writing calculations, and exploring data using natural language. Requires Tableau+ subscription.	**Insight Advisor** - natural language questions, suggested analyses, and data associations
Natural language Q&A	**Q&A** - natural language questions in plain English; analyses done in natural language	**NLP** - Tableau Agent and Tableau Pulse both support natural language interaction	**Insight Advisor NLP** - natural language questions and guided exploration
Proactive insights	**Quick Insights** - automated pattern detection and exploration shortcuts	**Tableau Pulse** - AI-driven, personalised metric tracking. Proactively notifies users of KPI changes using machine learning. The most mature proactive insight product of the three.	**Cognitive engine** - uses machine learning to refine search results and recommend associations, learning from user behaviour over time
AI availability	GA	Requires Tableau+	Included

Tableau + Salesforce: For organisations already using Salesforce, **Tableau Next** (via Tableau+ bundle) provides a full agentic analytics experience including Agentforce-powered AI agents, deep Salesforce Data Cloud integration, Tableau Semantics, and more. Tableau Next requires Salesforce and Data Cloud - standard Tableau Cloud/Server works independently.

Pricing Overview

All prices are USD list prices, billed annually, verified May 2026. Subject to change.

Power BI (Microsoft)

Licence	Price
Power BI Pro	$14.00/user/month *(+40% from Apr 2025)*
Power BI Premium Per User (PPU)	$24.00/user/month *(+20% from Apr 2025)*
Microsoft Fabric (replaces Premium capacity)	From approx $5,003/month (F64 SKU, annual)
Power BI Embedded	Usage-based via Azure - contact Microsoft

P-SKUs retired for new customers July 2024. Users in Microsoft 365 E5 not affected by Apr 2025 price increase.

Tableau (Salesforce)

Licence	Standard	Enterprise
Viewer	$15/user/mo	$35/user/mo
Explorer	$42/user/mo	$70/user/mo
Creator	$75/user/mo	$115/user/mo

Enterprise adds: Data Management, Advanced Management, enhanced governance and RLS. **Tableau+ Bundle** (premium AI tier with Tableau Agent, Pulse advanced, Tableau Next pathway) - pricing not publicly listed, contact Tableau/Keyrus.

Qlik

Licence	Price
Qlik Sense Business (cloud SaaS)	$30/user/month
Qlik Sense Enterprise SaaS	Not publicly listed (est. $70–$100/user/mo)
Qlik Sense Enterprise (on-premise)	Custom pricing on request
Qlik Cloud capacity-based (from Mar 2025)	Standard approx $3,300–$5,500/month

Qlik Enterprise SaaS pricing is not publicly listed and is negotiated individually. Capacity-based pricing is now the default model since March 2025.

All pricing is in USD, sourced from vendor websites in May 2026, and is subject to change. This is a neutral reference - not a sales document.

Strengths & Weaknesses

Strengths

Area	Power BI	Tableau	Qlik
Cost & licensing	Most affordable creator licence ($14/user/month)	Higher cost; Creator starts at $75/user/month	Business tier is $30/user/month
Ecosystem integration	Deep Microsoft 365, Azure, Teams, SharePoint, Dynamics, and Fabric integration	Native Microsoft Teams integration; strong Salesforce integration via Tableau Next	Unified analytics and data integration platform with Qlik + Talend
Ease of use	Fastest onboarding for Excel users; widespread skill availability	Best UI for interactive, freeform data exploration	Mobile-first design with responsive, touch-native interface
Visualisation	Strong AI-assisted reporting with Copilot; deep Teams integration	Industry-leading visualisation quality and design flexibility	Governed libraries support controlled self-service analytics
Data exploration	Linear visual exploration; less freeform without Premium	Best for interactive, ad hoc exploration	Associative engine enables open-ended exploration without pre-defined drill paths
Data handling	Purview supports governance, lineage, and classification; 1 GB Pro dataset limit	Hyper in-memory engine handles very large extracts efficiently	Strong native data prep with Qlik scripting and Talend; no hard dataset size limits
Deployment	Azure-only deployment; Windows-only Desktop	Broad deployment flexibility across cloud, on-premise, and multi-cloud	Full-native mobile app; broad governed deployment options

Weaknesses

Area	Power BI	Tableau	Qlik
Cost concerns	April 2025 price increases were significant; creators and consumers both need paid licences	Most expensive of the three; Enterprise adds substantially to total cost	Enterprise SaaS pricing is opaque; capacity pricing is complex
Platform constraints	Azure-only, Windows-only Desktop, and 1 GB Pro dataset limit	Tableau Agent and Tableau Next require premium licences; Tableau Next needs Salesforce and Data Cloud	Less polished interface; smaller partner and developer ecosystem
Learning curve	DAX is powerful but complex; advanced modelling takes significant investment	Annual commitment required; premium features add complexity	Steepest learning curve; scripting and Set Analysis are not intuitive for beginners
Vendor dependency	Heavy Microsoft ecosystem dependence	Strategic dependency on Salesforce for non-Salesforce organisations	Private company with less public transparency on roadmap and financials

Ideal Use Cases & Decision Guide

Use this guide to match your organisation's scenario to the right platform.

Scenario	Power BI	Tableau	Qlik
Microsoft 365 / Azure environment	✅ Best fit - deep Microsoft 365, Azure, Teams, SharePoint, Dynamics, and Fabric integration	⚠ Possible - strong Microsoft Teams integration, but less native to Microsoft 365 than Power BI	⚠ Possible - governed analytics platform, but not the strongest Microsoft-native fit
Deployment flexibility	✕ Not ideal - Azure-only deployment and Windows-only Desktop	✅ Best fit - broad cloud, on-premise, and multi-cloud deployment options	⚠ Possible - broad governed deployment options, with strong mobile support
Visualisation & design quality	⚠ Possible - strong AI-assisted reporting with Copilot	✅ Best fit - industry-leading visualisation quality and design flexibility	⚠ Possible - good governed analytics, but less polished UI than Tableau
Salesforce integration	⚠ Possible - no native advantage called out, but can be used alongside Salesforce workflows	✅ Best fit - Salesforce customers benefit from Tableau Next and Agentforce	✕ Not ideal - no comparable Salesforce-first integration highlighted
Embedded analytics (ISV)	⚠ Possible - can support sharing and reporting, but not positioned as the strongest embedded option	✅ Best fit - strong choice for ISVs and product teams embedding analytics into external apps	⚠ Possible - supported for governed analytics, but not the primary embedded analytics choice
Complex / multi-source data	⚠ Possible - governance and lineage are strong, but exploration is more linear	⚠ Possible - can connect broadly, but not the strongest fit for complex modelling	✅ Best fit - associative engine handles complex, multi-source data well
Data prep & ETL	⚠ Possible - supports governed data handling through Microsoft Fabric and Purview	✕ Not ideal - not positioned as a native ETL-first platform	✅ Best fit - strong native data transformation with Qlik scripting and Talend
Budget-conscious teams	✅ Best fit - lowest entry-level cost per creator	✕ Not ideal - highest cost of the three	⚠ Possible - Business tier is $30/user/month, but pricing can be opaque
Mac users	✕ Not ideal - Windows-only Desktop	✅ Best fit - broad deployment flexibility suits mixed-device teams	✅ Best fit - full-native mobile app and flexible deployment options

Least suitable: Power BI is least suitable for Mac-only teams, GCP/AWS-centric organisations, large-scale embedded analytics, or teams wanting minimal coding. Tableau is least suitable for budget-constrained small teams, lowest TCO requirements, or simple reporting needs. Qlik is least suitable for small teams or beginners, organisations wanting transparent pricing, or teams needing the best UI/UX out of the box.

keyrus

Summary Scorecard

Dimension	Power BI	Tableau	Qlik
Best for	Microsoft shops, Excel users, cost-conscious teams	Visualisation, flexibility, Salesforce customers	Complex data, multi-source environments, ETL + analytics
Easiest to learn	✅ Yes (for Excel users)	✅ Yes (for visual exploration)	❌ No - steepest curve
Lowest creator cost	✅ Yes ($14 Pro)	❌ No ($75 Creator)	Mid ($30 Business)
Best visualisation	Good	☆ Best in class	Good
Best deployment flexibility	❌ No (Azure only)	✅ Yes	✅ Yes
Best for Salesforce orgs	No	✅ Yes (Tableau Next)	No
Best Teams integration	✅ Yes (deepest)	✅ Yes (strong)	Limited
Best embedding APIs	No	✅ Yes	✅ Yes
Best for complex/messy data	No	No	✅ Yes (associative engine)
Best mobile experience	Good	Strong	☆ Strong (mobile-first design)

ⓘ This comparison was prepared by **Keyrus** as a neutral reference. All pricing verified May 2026 from vendor websites - subject to change.

For tailored advice, contact sales@keyrus.co.za

keyrus