2023 NoSQL DBaaS Performance: Couchbase Capella vs. Redis Enterprise Cloud

Using Yahoo! Cloud Serving Benchmark, this report compares the throughput and latency of the popular databases as a service (DBaaS) across four business scenarios and four different cluster configurations.

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1. Executive summary

NoSQL encompasses a wide variety of database technologies that were developed in response to a rise in the volume of data and the frequency with which information is stored, accessed, and updated. In contrast, relational databases were not designed to cope with scalability and agility challenges that modern applications require. Furthermore, relational databases cannot take advantage of the affordable storage and processing power available in today's cloud environments. Meanwhile, new-generation NoSQL solutions help to achieve the highest levels of performance and uptime for modern application workloads. Finally, teams are more regularly seeking Database-as-a-Service (DBaaS) options to avoid having to invest increasing amounts of time and money in cluster support, deployment, and maintenance.

This report compares the performance results of four NoSQL databases as a service: **Couchbase Capella** and **Redis Enterprise Cloud**. The goal of this report is to measure the relative performance in terms of latency and throughput that each database can achieve. The evaluation was conducted on four different cluster configurations—3, 6, 9, and 18 nodes—as well as under four different workloads.

The first workload performed *update-heavy* activity, involving 50% reads and 50% updates of the data. The second workload was *read-only*, with 100% read operations.The third workload performed a *short-range scan* that involved 95% scans and 5% updates, where short ranges of records were queried instead of individual ones. Finally, the fourth workload was a query with a single filtering option to which an offset and a limit were applied.

As a default tool for evaluation consistency, we utilized the Yahoo! Cloud Serving Benchmark (YCSB)—an open-source specification and program suite for evaluating retrieval and maintenance capabilities of computer programs.

2. A testing environment

2.1 YCSB instance configuration

To provide verifiable results, the benchmark was performed on easily obtained Amazon Elastic Compute Cloud (EC2) instances. The YCSB client was deployed to 10 compute-optimized large instances. Each client instance of YCSB produced 40 threads. This means the total load on the database was 400 threads for each test.

Table 2.1 *A description of the Amazon EC2 instance deployed to the YCSB client*

Family	Compute-optimized
Type	c4.2xlarge
vCPUs	8
Memory (GiB)	15
(continued in the next page)	

***Table 2.1** A description of the Amazon EC2 instance deployed to the YCSB client (continued)*

EBS-optimized available	Yes
Network performance	High
Platform	64-bit
Operating system	Ubuntu 18.04 LTS
AWS region	us-east-1

2.2 Couchbase Capella cluster configuration

Couchbase Capella is a fully managed Database as a Service. It combines the features of a key–value store allowing operations on single documents. The database also acts as a schemaless document store to access the documents by querying through SQL++ (SQL for JSON).

The Capella Control Panel includes a cluster sizing page, offering customers multiple options to choose from—such as instance sizes, configurations, and quantities. Couchbase Capella can also be tuned to deploy specific services to a single or several nodes in the cluster. The vendor calls this feature “Multi-Dimensional Scaling.”

Each node was configured to run the Data, Index, and Query services. The Data service is the most fundamental of all Couchbase services, providing access to data in memory and on disk. The Index service supports the creation of primary and global secondary indexes on items stored within Couchbase. The Query service supports the querying of data by means of SQL and relies on both the Index and Data services. Figure 2.2 shows the architecture of an example Capella cluster.

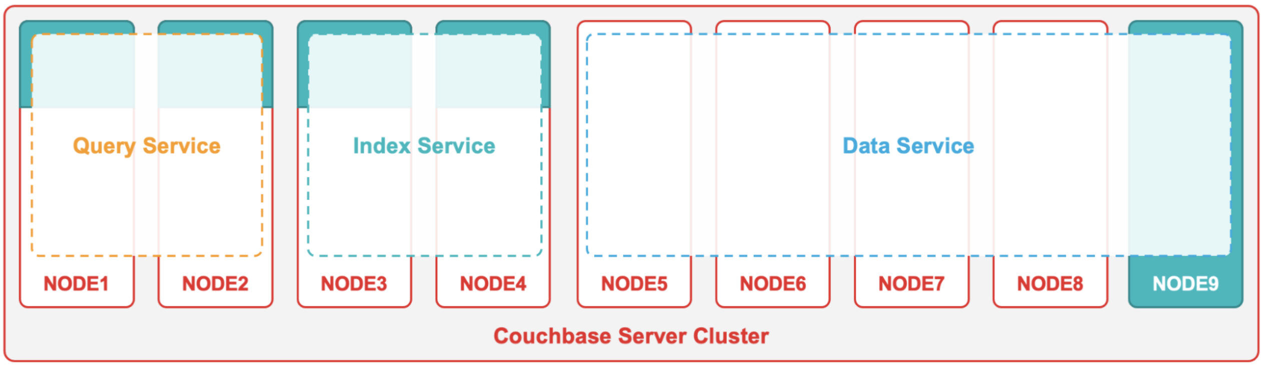

Figure 2.2 The architecture of a Couchbase Capella cluster ([image credit](#))

After the cluster is deployed, data access should be configured by creating database credentials and granting the required access permissions. The test’s bucket was created with half of the available system memory allocated for it. In the report, we have used a new storage engine called [Magma](#), which is designed to be highly performant for very large data sets that do not fit in memory.

The final step is to configure a list of allowed IPs on the control panel’s Connect tab, since Couchbase Capella allows clusters to connect to trusted IP addresses only.

***Table 2.2** Specification of a Couchbase Capella instance*

vCPUs	8
Memory (GB)	64
EBS storage (GB)	200
IOPS	5,700
AWS region	us-east-1

2.3 Redis Enterprise Cloud cluster configuration

Redis Enterprise Cloud is a fully managed Redis database service offering hosted on major public cloud services. Basically, it is an in-memory data structure store used as a database, cache, message broker, and streaming engine. For fast performance, it uses an in-memory data set, and it can also persist data. In addition, Redis Enterprise Cloud provides a lot of other features—such as linear scalability, instant failover, backups and recovery, predictable performance, etc. However, some configuration options, such as client caching, are not yet supported in Redis Enterprise Cloud unlike in Redis Enterprise Software.

We had multiple shards without high availability, so the architecture of our cluster looked like the one below. There are not a lot of details, because it is provided as a service, so the internals are hidden and are subject to change.

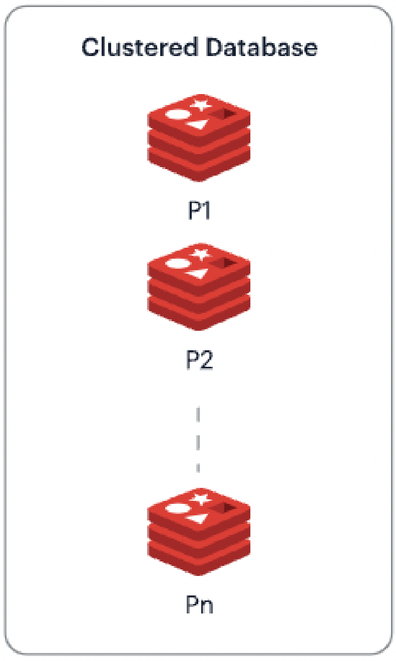

Figure 2.3 A clustered database in Redis Enterprise Cloud (image credit)

For our testing purposes, the RediSearch 2.0 and RedisJSON modules were used. These modules enabled us to work with data similar to how we would on a JSON document. Without the modules, it would not be possible to run Pagination Workload

We also applied the "*Data persistence*" option with value "*Append-only file every write*" to provide a better, apples-to-apples comparison of the other databases in this report. To satisfy these requirements, we used the "*Flexible*" plan as a subscription in Redis Enterprise Cloud. This plan provides unlimited connections and data persistence, using a pay-as-you-go model to support any size or throughput for the database. The spending threshold is the same that was used for DynamoDB.

To compare with the other databases, we calculated monthly charges and set up clusters by the costs. The high availability (replication) option and backups were disabled. Other configuration options remained unchanged.

For each type of cluster, we chose the highest amount of shards and memory available for the costs close to spending threshold of other databases:

- 3 nodes—11 shards (275 GB memory limit)
- 6 nodes—22 shards (550 GB memory limit)
- 9 nodes—33 shards (825 GB memory limit)
- 18 nodes—65 shards (1,625 GB memory limit)

2.4 Operating costs

2.4.1 Couchbase Capella costs

The monthly billing report for running Couchbase Capella includes per instance–hour costs billed by the provider. Approximate monthly total for supporting a Capella cluster of specified configuration:

- 3 nodes amounted to around $2,642
- 6 nodes amounted to around $5,284
- 9 nodes amounted to around $7,926
- 18 nodes amounted to around $15,851

Note that charges in Couchbase Capella are billed in Couchbase Capella Credits.

2.4.2 Redis Enterprise Cloud costs

The pricing of Redis Cloud Enterprise depends on the number of shards, which was determined based on the monthly total costs for the MongoDB Atlas environment (got from previous report):

- 3 nodes amounted to around $4,634
- 6 nodes amounted to around $9,267
- 9 nodes amounted to around $13,900
- 18 nodes amounted to around $27,378

3. Workloads and tools

Database performance is defined by the speed at which a database processes basic operations. A basic operation is an action performed by a workload executor that drives multiple client threads. Each thread executes a sequential series of operations by making calls to a database interface layer both to load a database (the *load* phase) and to execute a workload (the *transaction* phase). The threads throttle the rate at which they generate requests, making it possible to directly control the load against the database. In addition, the threads measure latency, as well as the achieved throughput of their operations, and then report these measurements to the statistics module.

3.1 Workloads

The performance of each database was evaluated under the following workloads:

1) **Workload A.** Update heavily: 50% read and 50% update, request distribution is Zipfian.
2) **Workload C.** Read only: 100% read, request distribution is Zipfian.
3) **Workload E.** Scan short ranges: 95% scan and 5% update, request distribution is Uniform.
4) **Pagination Workload.** Filter with `OFFSET` and `LIMIT`.

3.2 Tools

The YCSB client was used as a worker, consisting of the following components:

- a workload executor
- the YCSB client threads
- the extensions
- the statistics module
- the database connectors

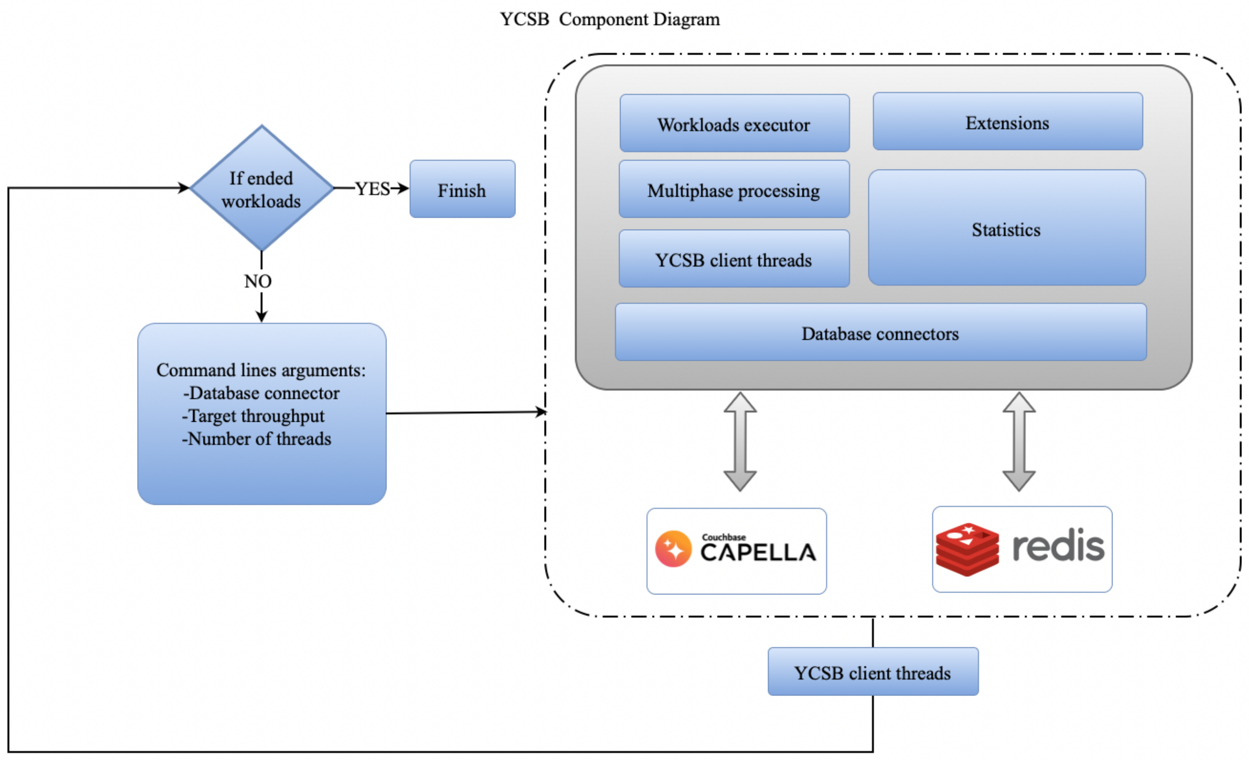

Figure 3.2.1 The components of the YCSB client

The workloads were tested under the following conditions:

- Data fits memory.
- Durability is false.
- Replication is set to “1,” signifying that just a single replica is available for each data set.

Workloads A, C, and E are standard workloads provided by YCSB. Default data models were used for these workloads. Pagination Workload represents scenarios from real-life domains, such as finance (server-side pagination for listing filtered transactions). To x emulate these scenarios on a domain level, a customer model was introduced for that workload:

Customer

```
id
address: {
            country : country name
            ...
           }
...
```

Figure 3.2.2 A graphic representation of the customer model

4. YCSB benchmark results

4.1 Workload A: the update-heavy mode

4.1.1 Workload definition and model details

Workload A is an update-heavy workload that simulates typical actions of an e-commerce solution. This is a basic key–value workload. The scenario was executed with the following settings:

- The read/update ratio was 50%–50%.
- The Zipfian request distribution was used.
- The size of a data set was scaled in accordance with the cluster size: 25 million records (each 1 KB in size, consisting of 10 fields and a key) on a 3-node cluster, 50 million records on a 6-node cluster, 100 million records on a 9-node cluster, and 200 million records on a 18-node cluster.

Couchbase Capella stores data in buckets and collections, which are the logical groups of items—key–value pairs. vBuckets are physical partitions of the bucket data. By default, Capella creates a number of master vBuckets per bucket to store bucket data and evenly distribute vBuckets across all cluster nodes.

Querying with document keys is the most efficient method, since a query request is sent directly to a proper vBucket holding target documents. This approach does not require any index creation and is the fastest way to retrieve a document due to the key–value storage.

4.1.2 Query

The following queries were used to perform Workload A.

***Table 4.1.2** Evaluated queries for Workload A*

	Read	**Update**
Couchbase Key–Value API	`collection.get(id, $2, getOptions().timeout(kvTimeout))`	`collection.upsert(id, content, upsertOptions().timeout(kvTimeout).expiry(documentExpiry).durability(persistTo, replicateTo))`
Redis CLI	`HMGET $1 $2`	`HMSET $1 $2 $3`

4.1.3 Evaluation results

On each type of a cluster, Couchbase Capella significantly outperformed Redis. On a 3-node cluster, it had a throughput of 232,050 ops/sec with a 2.67 ms latency. Couchbase Capella's performance improved all the way to an 18-node cluster, where it had a throughput of 423,580 ops/sec with less than a 1 ms latency.

As the cluster size increased, Redis also demonstrated better performance. It showed its best performance on an 18-node cluster. Redis Enterprise Cloud achieved throughput of 98,700 ops/sec and a 4.15 ms latency.

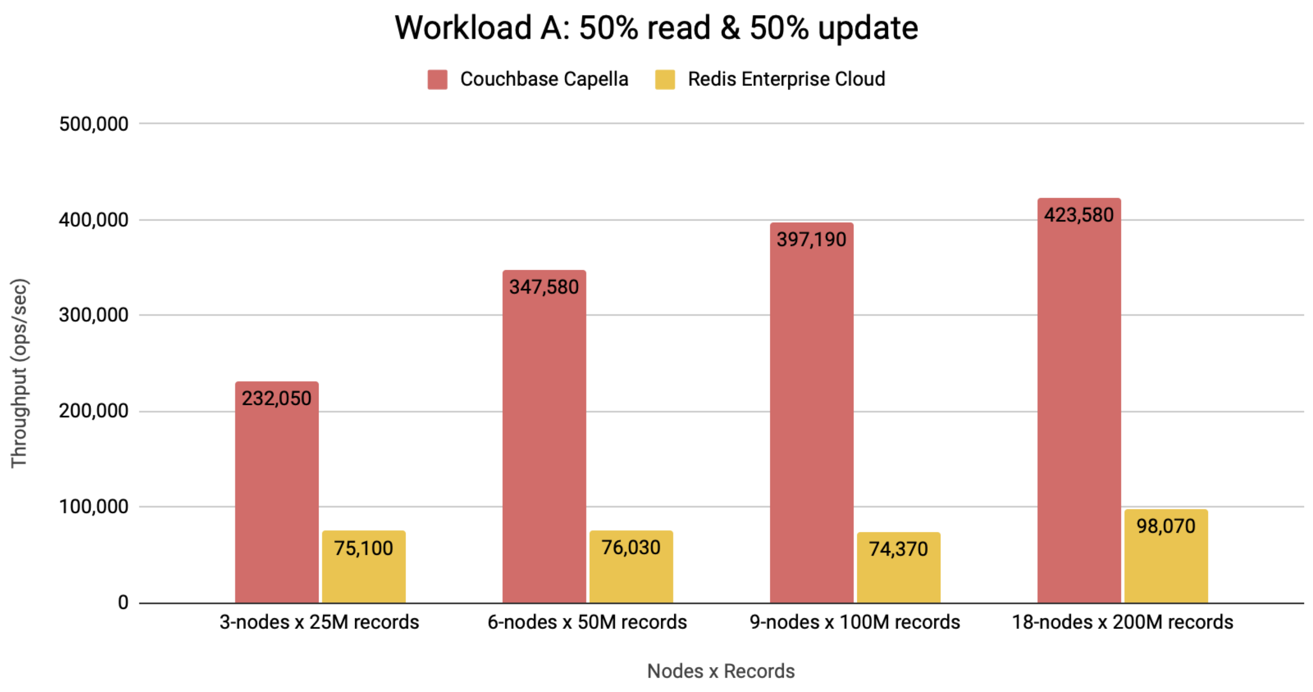

Figure 4.1.3.1 Throughput results under Workload A on 3-, 6-, 9-, and 18-node clusters

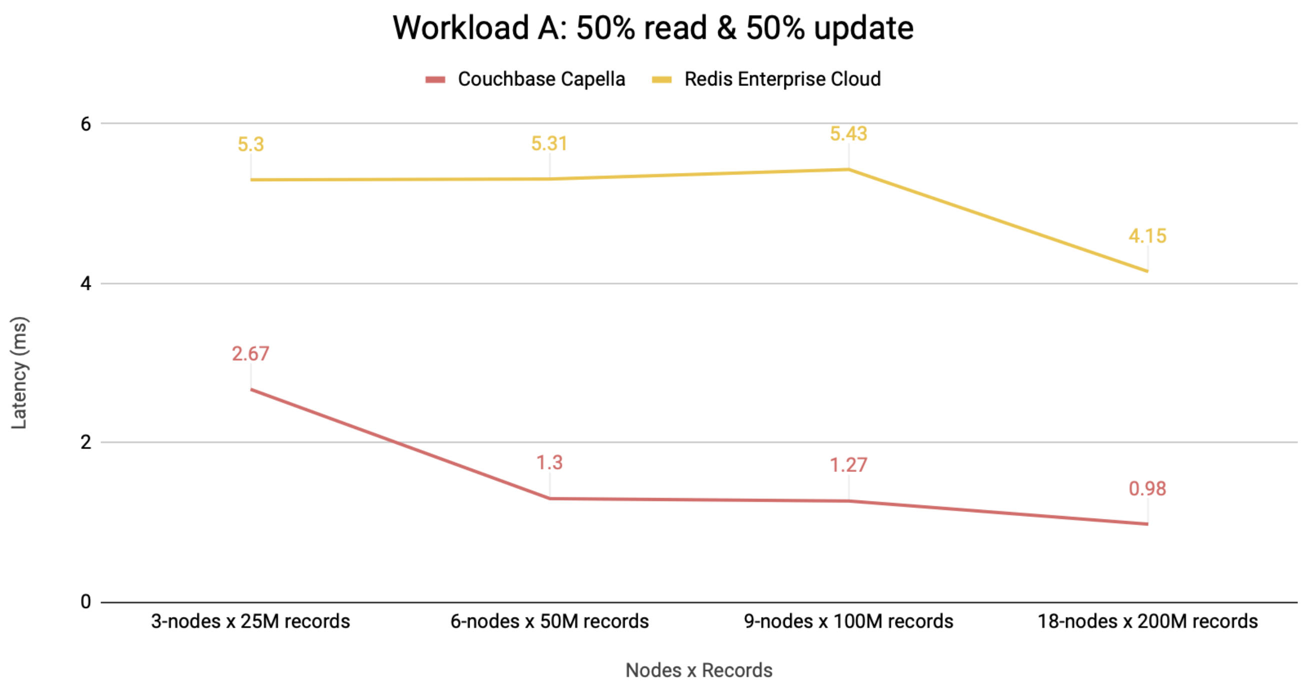

Figure 4.1.3.2 Latency results under Workload A on 3-, 6-, 9-, and 18-node clusters

4.1.4 Summary

The throughput of each database grew constantly depending on the type of a cluster. All databases achieved the throughput limit for each cluster type, except DynamoDB for read operations on an 18-node cluster. Couchbase Capella demonstrated high throughput growth and clearly outperformed Redis Enterprise Cloud on each type of a cluster.

Couchbase Capella stood out with a latency of about 1 ms on 6-, 9-, and 18-node clusters, and a latency of 2.67 ms on 3 nodes. Redis Enterprise Cloud had a stable latency of about 5 ms, which decreased to 4.15 ms on an 18-node cluster. It also showed significant improvement in throughput only on an 18-node cluster.

4.2 Workload C: read-only

4.2.1 Workload definition and model details

Workload C is 100% read. The workload simulates user profile cache. The scenario was executed under the following settings:

- The read ratio was 100%.
- The Zipfian request distribution was used.

- The size of a data set was scaled in accordance with the cluster size: 25 million records (each 1 KB in size, consisting of 10 fields and a key) on a 3-node cluster, 50 million records on a 6-node cluster, 100 million records on a 9-node cluster, and 200 million records on a 18-node cluster.

4.2.2 Query

The following queries were used to perform *Workload C*.

***Table 4.2.2** Evaluated queries for Workload C*

	Read
Couchbase Key–Value API	`collection.get(id, $2, getOptions().timeout(kvTimeout))`
Redis CLI	`HMGET $1 $2`

4.2.3 Evaluation results

In the case, Redis Enterprise Cloud demonstrated the highest result on a 3-node cluster with 623,900 ops/sec and a latency of only 0.597 ms. Redis also performed the best on 6- and 18-node clusters. Still, on a 9-node cluster, Couchbase Capella outperformed with 578,590 ops/sec and a latency of 0.63 ms. Of the rest of the cluster configurations, Couchbase Capella came in second after Redis.

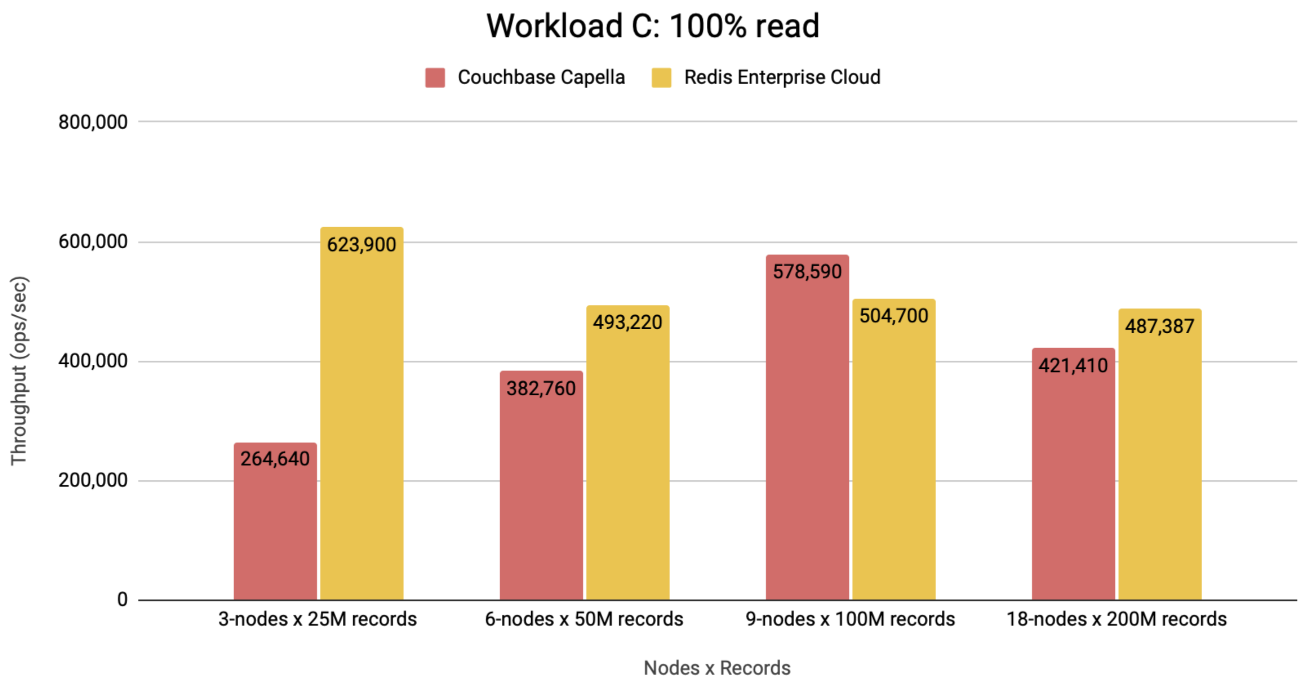

Figure 4.2.3.1 Throughput results under Workload C on 3-, 6-, 9-, and 18-node clusters

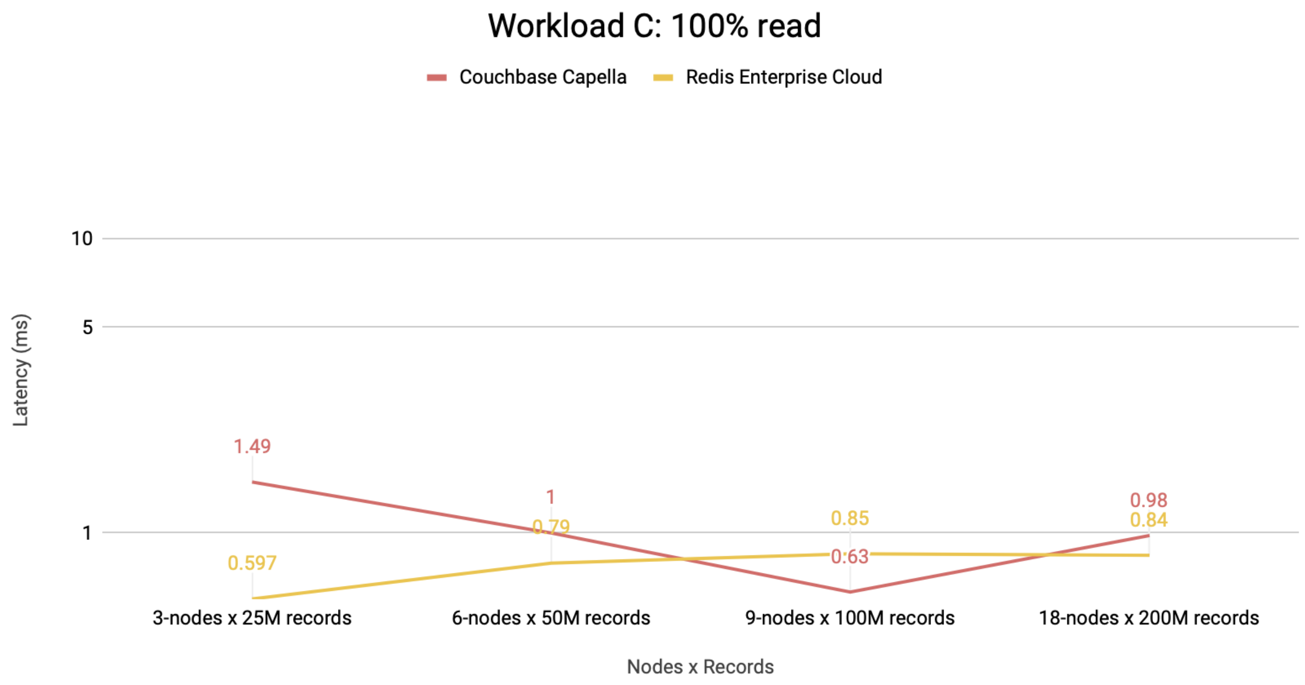

Figure 4.2.3.2 Latency results under Workload C on 3-, 6-, 9-, and 18-node clusters

4.2.4 Summary

Workload C, which consisted of simple read operations, produced interesting results for the databases. Redis Enterprise Cloud achieved the best results for this workload, which was not surprising, as Redis was designed for this type of operation. However, its performance dropped significantly after 3 nodes, indicating that, for this amount of data, Redis started to perform worse even with a higher number of shards.

Couchbase Capella showed a steady and significant growth in performance up to the 18-node cluster, with a small drop in throughput and latency—from 578,590 ops/sec with a latency of 0.63 ms to 487,387 ops/sec with a latency of 0.98 ms. Nonetheless, this performance was still very good.

4.3 Workload E: scanning short ranges

4.3.1 Workload definition and model details

Workload E is a short-range scan workload in which short ranges of records are queried instead of individual ones. This workload simulates threaded conversations, where each scan goes through the posts in a given thread (assuming the entries are clustered by ID). The scenario was executed under the following settings:

- The scan/update ratio was 95%–5%.
- The Zipfian request distribution was used.
- The size of a data set was scaled in accordance with the cluster size: 25 million records (each 1 KB in size, consisting of 10 fields and a key) on a 3-node cluster, 50 million records on a 6-node cluster, 100 million records on a 9-node cluster, and 200 million records on a 18-node cluster.
- The maximum scan length reached 100 records.
- Uniform was used as a scan length distribution.

The hash-based partitioning ensures an even distribution of data at the expense of efficient range queries. Hashed key–value results in random distribution of data across chunks and, therefore, shards. However, random distribution makes it more likely that a range query on a shard key will not be able to target a few shards, but would more likely query every shard in order to return a result. The hash-based partitioning was used for all partitioning, so some performance degradation is expected here.

4.3.2 Query

The following queries were used to perform Workload E.

***Table 4.3.2** Evaluated queries for Workload E*

	Scan	Update
Couchbase SQL++ / Key–Value API	`SELECT meta().id FROM `bucket` WHERE meta().id >= $1 ORDER BY meta().id LIMIT $2`	`collection.upsert(id, content, upsertOptions().timeout(kvTimeout).expiry(documentExpiry).durability(persistTo, replicateTo))`
Redis CLI	`ZRANGEBYSCORE id $1 $2`	`HMSET $1 $2 $3`

4.3.3 Evaluation results

On a 3-node cluster, Redis Enterprise Cloud had the best throughput—compared to other types of clusters—with 34,840 ops/sec. But then results of Redis has dropped, in the same results of Couchbase Capella were going up and reached the best result on 18-nodes cluster - 71,170 ops/sec and latency - 3.84 ms.

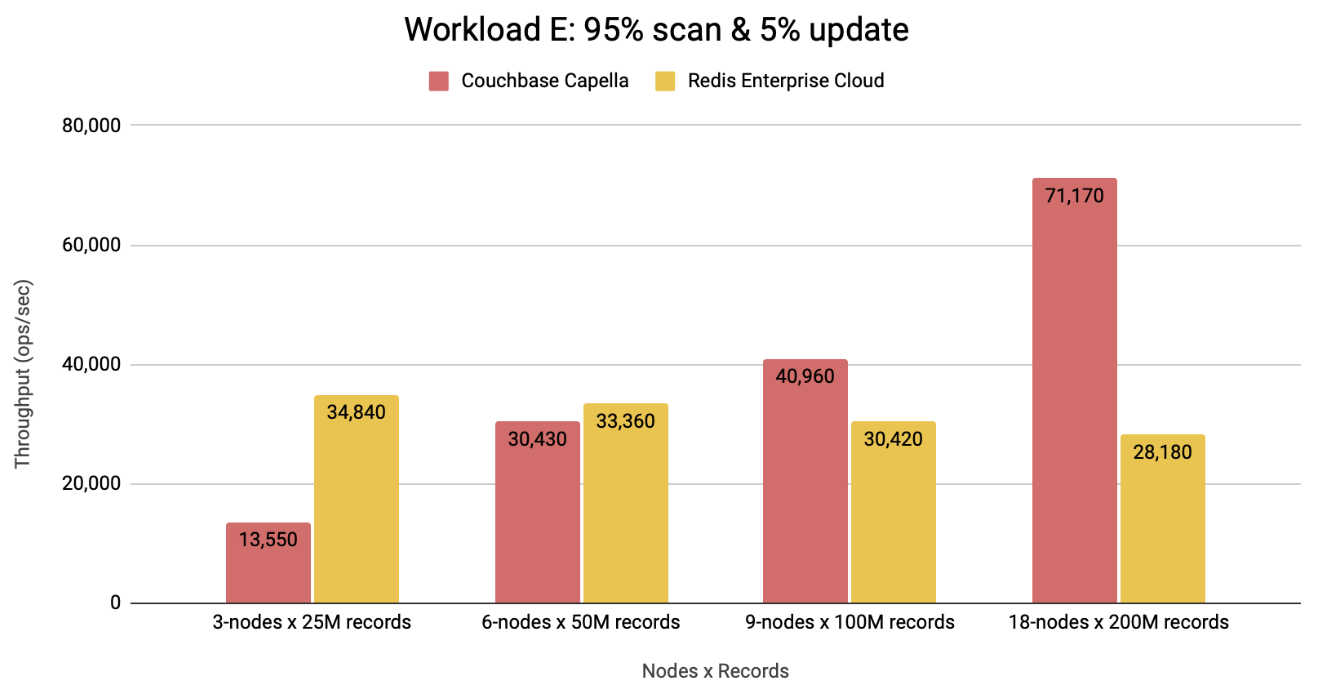

Figure 4.3.3.1 Throughput results under Workload E on 3-, 6-, 9-, and 18-node clusters

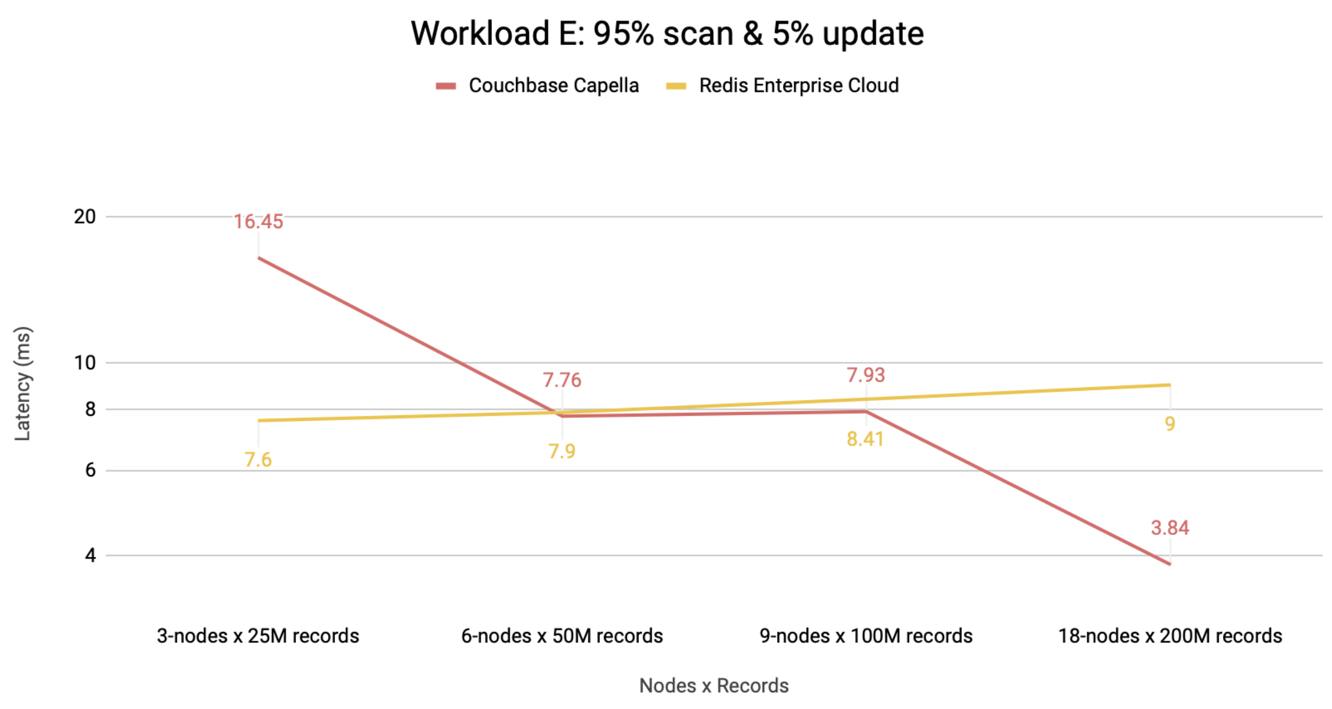

Figure 4.3.3.2 Latency results under Workload E on 3-, 6-, 9-, and 18-node clusters

4.3.4 Summary

Under *Workload E*, Redis demonstrated the pretty good throughput results on 6 and 9 nodes but then it started to drop.
As the number of nodes grew, Couchbase Capella exhibited good results in both latency and throughput without throwing errors. The latency was the lowest and most predictable across all the databases, decreasing from 16 ms on 3 nodes to 3.84 ms on an 18-node cluster. Additionally, the size of the cluster significantly impacted Couchbase Capella's throughput, which increased from 13,550 to 71,170 ops/sec, demonstrating more than a 5x improvement.

4.4 Pagination Workload: filter with OFFSET and LIMIT

4.4.1 Workload definition and model details

Pagination Workload is a query with a single filtering option, an offset, and a limit. The workload simulates a selection by field with pagination. The scenario was executed under the following settings:

- The read ratio was 100%.
- The size of a data set was scaled in accordance with the cluster size: 1 million customers (each 4 KB in size) on a 3-node cluster, 5 million customers on a 6-node cluster, 25 million customers on a 9-node cluster, and 100 million customers on an 18-node cluster.
- The maximum of a query length reached 100 records.
- Uniform was used as a query length distribution.
- The maximum query offset reached 5 records.
- Uniform was used as a query offset distribution.

The primary index of Couchbase allows for querying any field of a document. However, this type of querying is rather slow, since it retrieves all the documents of all types in the bucket, whether or not a query eventually returns them to the user. For the sake of fast query execution, secondary indexes are created for specific fields by which data is filtered. Couchbase provides two index storage modes: memory- and disk-optimized. The latter is the default mode.

Memory-optimized indexes use an in-memory database with a lock-free skip list, which has a probabilistic ordered data structure and, thus, performs at in-memory speeds. The search is similar to a binary one over linked lists with the `O(log n)` complexity. The lock-free skip list is used to provide nonblocking reads/writes and maximize utilization of the CPU cores. On top of a lock-free skip list, there is a multiversion manager responsible for regular snapshotting in the background.

Memory-optimized indexes reside in memory and require the amount of RAM available to fit all the data inside it. The indexes on a given node will stop processing further mutations, if a node runs out of index RAM quota. The index maintenance is paused until sufficient memory becomes available on the node. Since the data set was required to fit the available memory, memory-optimized indexes fit the requirements well.

Memory-optimized global secondary indexes were created for filtering fields with index replication on each cluster node:

```
CREATE INDEX `query1` ON `bucket`(`address`.`country`) USING GSI;
```

Though Redis is not designed to work with JSON documents, it offers additional modules like RediSearch 2.0 and RedisJSON, which we utilized in this case. To work with the APIs of these modules, one needs to apply an index for searching by a second-level JSON key. To do this, we used the following command:

```
FT.CREATE query1-idx ON JSON SCHEMA $.address.country AS
address_country TAG
```

The field was marked as a `TAG` type, since we only require string comparison and not RegEx or substring search. After applying the index, we can utilize it in our query (see section 4.4.2 below) to retrieve any field needed.

4.4.2 Query

The following queries were used to perform *Pagination Workload*.

Table 4.4.2 *Evaluated queries for Pagination Workload*

Couchbase SQL++	`SELECT meta().id`
	`FROM `bucket``
	`WHERE address.country='$1'`
	`OFFSET $2`
	`LIMIT $3`

Redis CLI	`FT.SEARCH query1-idx  "@address_country:$1"`
	`LIMIT $2 $3`

4.4.3 Evaluation results

Couchbase Capella outperformed Redis on all types of clusters, achieving the highest throughput of 163,640 ops/sec on an 18-node cluster with a latency of 2.52 ms.
Redis Enterprise Cloud showed bad performance compared to Capella, with very low throughput and huge latency. Its best performance was achieved on a 3-node cluster, with 1,520 ops/sec and a 291 ms latency, but this decreased to 170 ops/sec with latency exceeding 5 seconds on larger clusters.

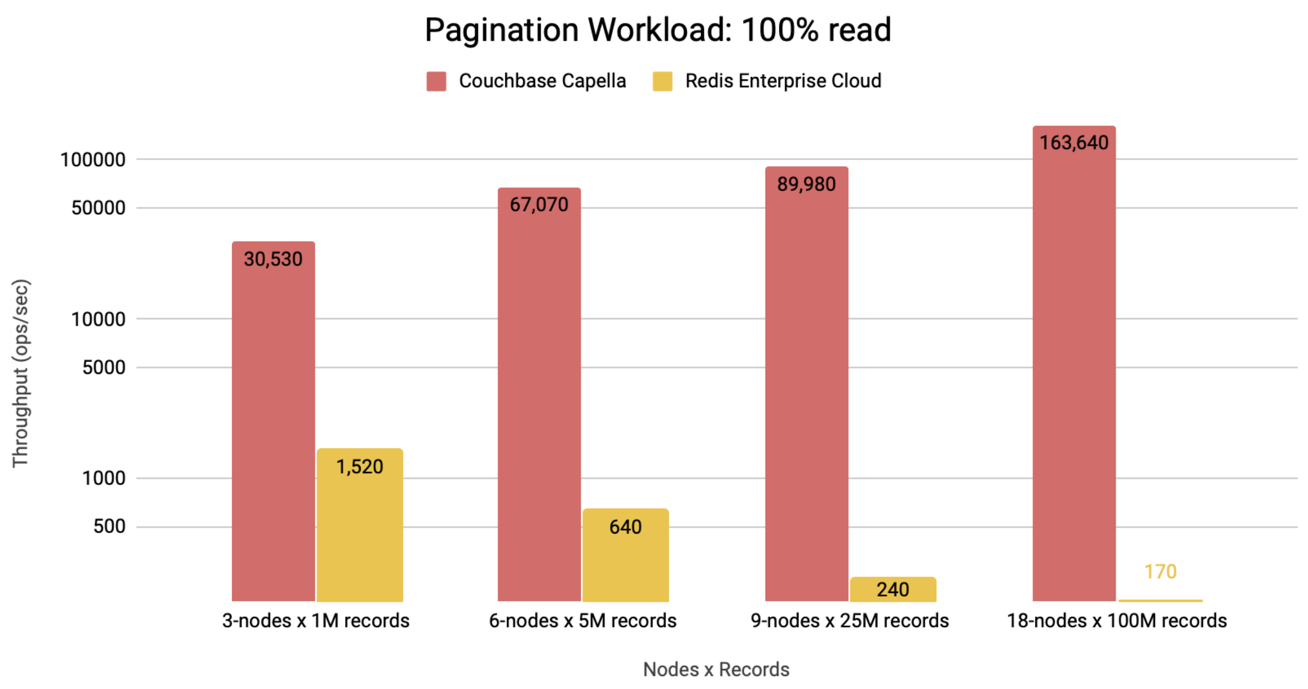

Figure 4.4.3.1 Throughput results under Pagination Workload on 3-, 6-, 9-, and 18-node clusters

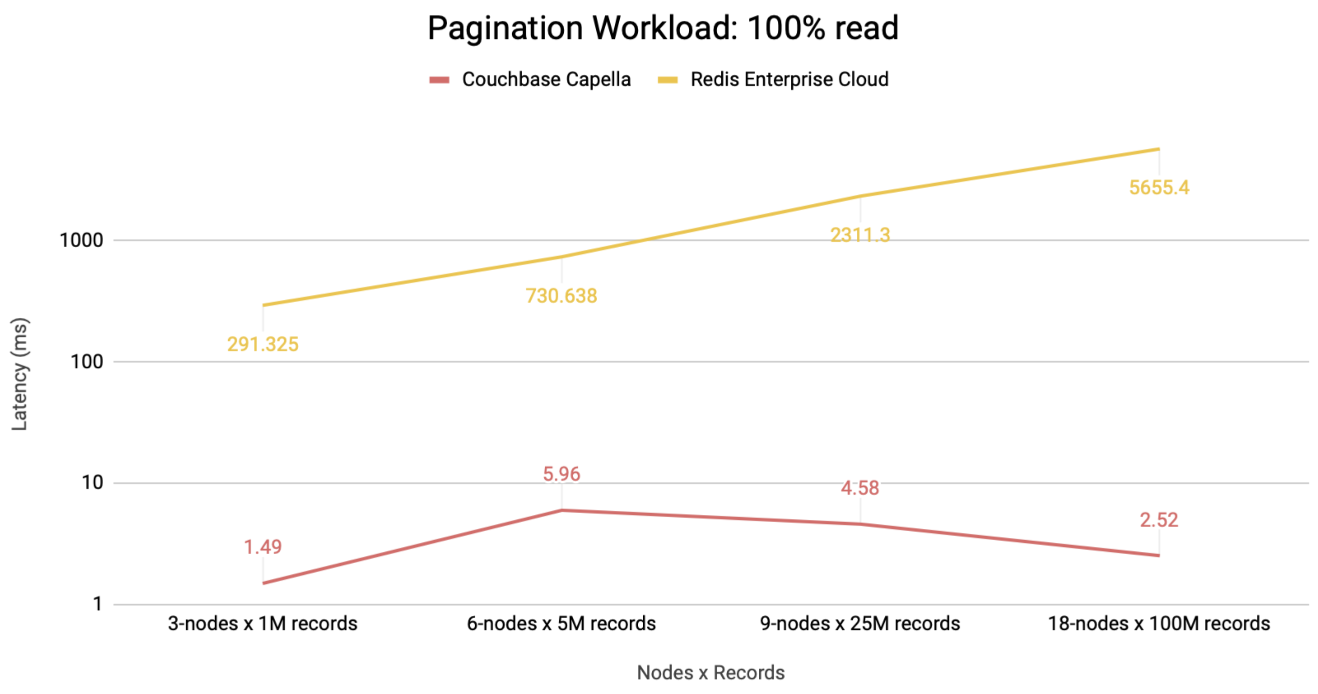

Figure 4.4.3.2 Latency results under Pagination Workload on 3-, 6-, 9-, and 18-node clusters

4.4.4 Summary

In *Pagination Workload*, Couchbase Capella outperformed Redis, with throughput increasing as the number of nodes grew. However, latency increased from 1.49 ms on 3 nodes to 6 ms on 6 nodes before dropping to 2.52 ms on 18 nodes. At the same time, the workload's throughput increased by over 5 times from 3 to 18 node clusters.

On the other hand, Redis Enterprise Cloud showed very poor results, indicating that Redis may not be suitable for this type of operation. Its performance decreased as the cluster size and number of records grew.

5. Conclusion

Typically, no single database as a service is perfect for meeting all the requirements of a given scenario. Each solution has its advantages and disadvantages, which may become more or less important depending on the specific criteria. Despite this, DBaaS can help engineers to reduce the time needed for deployment, configuration, and support.

Though DBaaS solutions do not offer broad system tools for configurations, the databases have been optimally tuned for each workload. Therefore, configurations can be changed based on workloads.

Couchbase Capella performed better than the other databases in Workload A, E and Pagination Workload. In Workload C, Capella was second only to Redis Enterprise Cloud. The query engine of Couchbase Capella supports aggregation, filtering, and other operations on large data sets. As clusters and data sets grow in size, Couchbase Capella ensures a high level of scalability across these operations. Capella was good overall and showed that it is capable of performing any type of query with good performance.

Redis Enterprise Cloud performed well during simple operations, especially with read queries, but it exhibited poor results while pagination. Redis is ideal for using cache and similar scenarios, but it is challenging to compare as a universal database for any type of query.

6. Appendix

6.1 Indexes for the scan query

Couchbase indexes

```
CREATE PRIMARY INDEX ON `bucket` WITH {"num_replica":
NUMBER_OF_INDEX_NODES - 1}
```

6.2 Indexes for Pagination Workload

Couchbase indexes

```
CREATE PRIMARY INDEX ON `bucket` WITH {"num_replica":
NUMBER_OF_INDEX_NODES - 1};

CREATE INDEX `query1` ON `bucket`(`address`.`country`) WITH
{"num_replica": NUMBER_OF_INDEX_NODES - 1};
```

Redis Enterprise Cloud indexes

```
FT.CREATE query1-idx ON JSON SCHEMA $.address.country AS
address_country TAG
```

6.3 Pricing

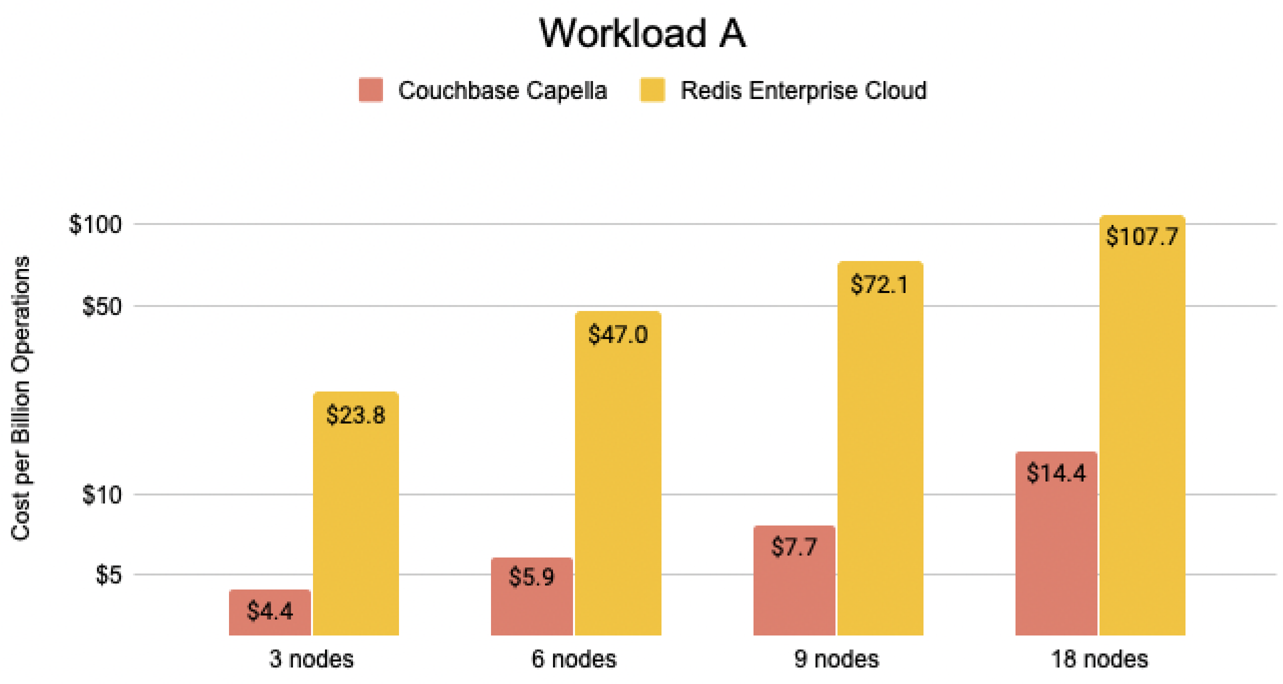

Figure 6.4.1 Cost per billion operations for Workload A

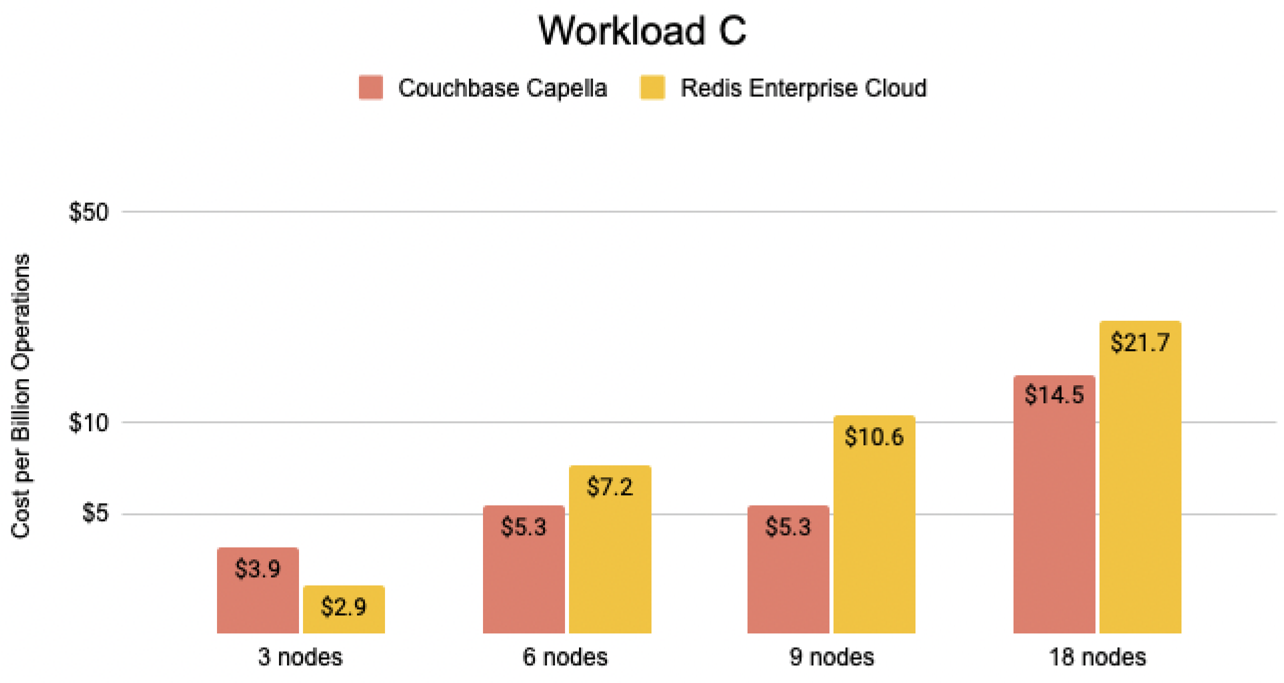

Figure 6.4.2 Cost per billion operations for Workload C

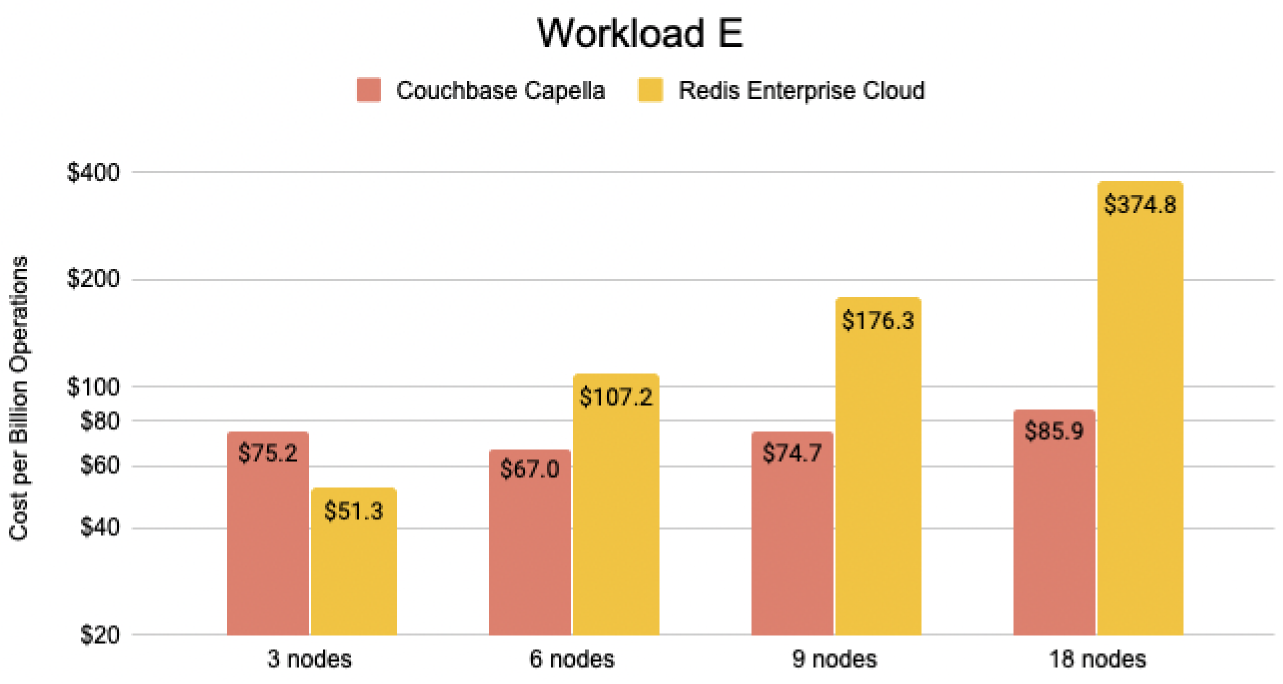

Figure 6.4.3 Cost per billion operations for Workload E

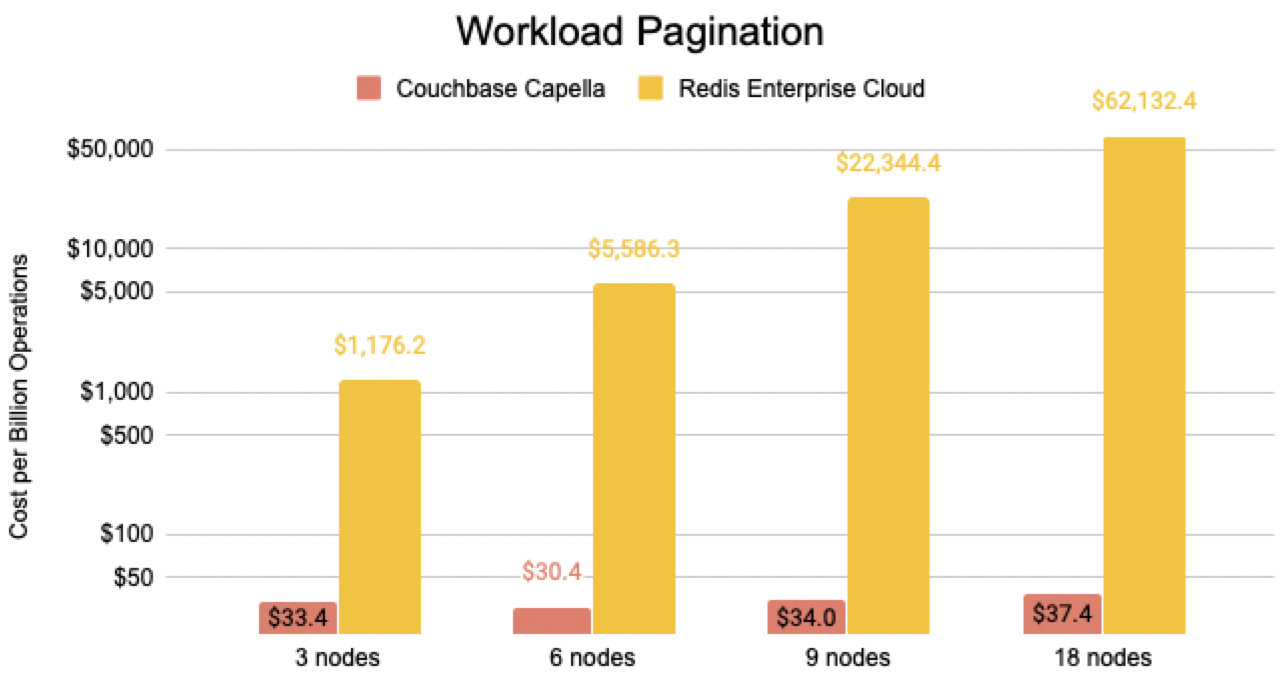

Figure 6.4.4 Cost per billion operations for Pagination Workload

7. About the author

Ivan Shyrma is Data Engineer at Altoros with extensive hands-on experience in high-load, scalable applications and web services development. Ivan has worked as a full-stack engineer for several years designing durable distributed systems. He is able to create complex architecture solutions, adopt systems for production use, and is keen on resolving any engineering problems.