

Firefox ESR, Windows

In Windows, why not transition to 64-bit Firefox ESR "now", especially for new installs? For example, in Cornell's CM Windows 10 OSDs.

Questions

In Windows, should we still be installing the Windows Firefox ESR 32-bit version (as CM's OSD has), or instead be installing the 64-bit Firefox ESR version?

What are the plug-in incompatibilities with Windows Firefox 64-bit (ESR or regular), especially ones which are particularly relevant to work at Cornell?

If no pertinent incompatibilities, are there other reasons not to make the 64-bit our default Firefox ESR install on Windows?

- <https://blog.mozilla.org/firefox/firefox-64-default-64-bit-windows/>
- [https://www.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/organizations/all/?q=English%20\(US\)](https://www.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/organizations/all/?q=English%20(US))

Information and analysis

Per <https://blog.mozilla.org/firefox/firefox-64-default-64-bit-windows/>, above:

- The 64-bit compared to the 32-bit is "a more secure version of Firefox, one that also [crashes a whole lot less](#). How much less? In our tests so far, 64-bit Firefox reduced crashes by 39% on machines with 4GB of RAM or more.[...] 64-bit applications can access more memory and are less likely to crash than 32-bit applications. Also, with the jump from 32 to 64 bits, a security feature called [Address Space Layout Randomization](#) (ASLR) works better to protect you from attackers. macOS and Linux users, fret not. You already enjoy a Firefox that's optimized for 64-bit."

"Mozilla began to automatically switch users from 32-bit Firefox to 64-bit Firefox, with the update to [Firefox version 56.0.1](#) on October 9, 2017.", per <https://support.mozilla.org/en-US/kb/switch-32-bit-64-bit>.

- "Mozilla will not migrate users with 32-bit Firefox version 56.0.1 or later" so that's the way to opt-out of the forced migration, per <https://support.mozilla.org/en-US/kb/64-bit-migration-opt-out>.

Seems the writing is on the wall that the 64-bit version is in our future. Thus, there should be a plan for vetting and transitioning to defaulting to FF 64-bit ESR, or explicitly warning against it, for "good reasons".

- What is being done or planned at the IT@Cornell/CIT/ITSG level or within any units?

Oliver's take:

- I suppose it would be good to know if there are use-cases **requiring** the 64-bit version, as a carrot (seems unlikely right now). And conversely, learning of any negatives to keep using Windows Firefox 32-bit, as a stick (also seems unlikely right now). Those two factors could help inform priorities.
- My personal motivation to ask this question is that my default approach to versions management on applications is to consider using the latest and greatest version unless good reasons not to. Especially for software we are actively installing on new systems! To wit, per the first web page cited above, "a more secure version of Firefox, one that also [crashes a whole lot less](#)." Sounds like a potential win, if low or no downsides.