Ubuntu 21.04 is the latest release of Ubuntu and comes at the mid-point between the most recent Long Term Supported (LTS) release of Ubuntu 20.04 LTS and the forthcoming 22.04 LTS release due in April 2022. This provides a good opportunity to take stock of some of the latest security features delivered in this release, on the road to 22.04 LTS. Ubuntu 21.04 brings with it a vast amount of improvements and features across a wide variety of packages. In this blog post, we will take a look at those features and improvements that add to the overall security of a Ubuntu system.

Starting from the bottom-up, one of the most fundamental components in Ubuntu is the GRUB2 boot-loader. In light of the recent additional GRUB2 secure-boot bypass vulnerabilities, the Ubuntu Foundations team considered options to make Ubuntu more secure by enabling easier grub updates. The outcome was to change the way GRUB2 is shipped in Ubuntu. In general Ubuntu releases would ship with a fixed version of GRUB2 (and many other packages) at release time and so when it came time to fix security issues, patches would have to be backported to an aging codebase. This brings numerous technical challenges, so to alleviate these, a single GRUB2 package will now be shipped across all supported Ubuntu releases, with 21.04 being the initial release to support this feature.

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