Browser updates related to cross-site cookies

Overview

Google Chrome version 80, currently scheduled to be released on February 4, 2020, will include updates to its handling of cross-site (aka 3rd party) cookies.

For more information, see https://blog.chromium.org/2019/10/developers-get-ready-for-new.html

While specifics have not yet been finalized, Mozilla Firefox is also likely to update its defaults for cross-site cookies.

This change will impact some MIT services. For example, some vendor sites that use Touchstone authentication may need to update how they handle cookies passed between idp.mit.edu (Touchstone) and the vendor site.

Test with the updated SameSite cookie attribute

Firefox

- Verify that you are using Firefox version 60 or higher, and are NOT using Firefox ESR.
  - You can upgrade to the latest Firefox version at https://getfirefox.com
  - Note that Firefox Extended Support Release (ESR), which is available from the IST software download grid, does not currently support the updated, more secure SameSite cookie attribute configuration.

  Navigate to: about:config

  Search for "samesite"

  Search results displays these two configurations. Set them to True:
  - network.cookie.sameSite.laxByDefault
  - network.cookie.sameSite.noneRequiresSecure

Chrome

Chrome can be configured using the settings detailed below to implement the more secure cross-site cookie settings. However, Chrome will make an exception for cookies set without a SameSite attribute less than 2 minutes ago. This means that if you are testing Touchstone login, you will need to load the Touchstone page, then wait 2 minutes before completing Touchstone and Duo authentication.

- Navigate to chrome://flags
- Enable two experiments:
  - SameSite by default cookies
  - Cookies without SameSite must be secure

Vendor communications
Google Chrome is changing its handling of cross-site cookies, beginning with version 80, which is currently scheduled to be released on February 4, 2020. For more information, see https://blog.chromium.org/2019/10/developers-get-ready-for-new.html. While specifics have not yet been finalized, Mozilla Firefox is also likely to update its defaults for cross-site cookies.

These changes will impact integration with MIT’s SAML SSO provider. Updates are needed to [site name] in order for SAML authentication to continue to function as expected.

Please let us know if additional information would be helpful.