

Workgroup: Network Working Group
Internet-Draft:
draft-ietf-tls-ticketrequests-05
Published: 24 April 2020
Intended Status: Standards Track
Expires: 26 October 2020
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TLS Ticket Requests

Abstract

TLS session tickets enable stateless connection resumption for clients without server-side, per-client state. Servers vend an arbitrary number of session tickets to clients, at their discretion, upon connection establishment. Clients store and use tickets when resuming future connections. This document describes a mechanism by which clients can specify the desired number of tickets needed for future connections. This extension aims to provide a means for servers to determine the number of tickets to generate in order to reduce ticket waste, while simultaneously priming clients for future connection attempts.

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1. Introduction

As as described in [[RFC8446](#)], TLS servers vend clients an arbitrary number of session tickets at their own discretion in NewSessionTicket messages. There are at least three limitations with this design.

First, servers vend some (often hard-coded) number of tickets per connection. Some server implementations return a different default number of tickets for session resumption than for the initial full handshake that created the session. No static choice, whether fixed, or resumption-dependent is ideal for all situations.

Second, clients do not have a way of expressing their desired number of tickets, which can impact future connection establishment. For example, clients can open multiple TLS connections to the same server for HTTP, or race TLS connections across different network interfaces. The latter is especially useful in transport systems

that implement Happy Eyeballs [[RFC8305](#)]. Since clients control connection concurrency and resumption, a standard mechanism for requesting more than one ticket is desirable.

Third, all tickets in the client's possession ultimately derive from some initial full handshake. Especially when the client was initially authenticated with a client certificate, that session may need to be refreshed from time to time. Consequently, a server may periodically force a full handshake even when the client presents a valid ticket. When that happens, it is possible that any other tickets derived from the same original session are equally invalid. A client avoids a full handshake on subsequent connections if it replaces all stored tickets with fresh ones obtained from the just performed full handshake. The number of tickets the server should vend for a full handshake may therefore need to be larger than the number for routine resumption.

This document specifies a new TLS extension - "ticket_request" - that can be used by clients to express their desired number of session tickets. Servers can use this extension as a hint of the number of NewSessionTicket messages to vend. This extension is only applicable to TLS 1.3 [[RFC8446](#)], DTLS 1.3 [[I-D.ietf-tls-dtls13](#)], and future versions thereof.

1.1. Requirements Language

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "NOT RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this document are to be interpreted as described in [[RFC2119](#)] [[RFC8174](#)] when, and only when, they appear in all capitals, as shown here.

2. Use Cases

The ability to request one or more tickets is useful for a variety of purposes:

- *Parallel HTTP connections: To minimize ticket reuse while still improving performance, it may be useful to use multiple, distinct tickets when opening parallel connections. Clients must therefore bound the number of parallel connections they initiate by the number of tickets in their possession, or risk ticket re-use.

- *Connection racing: Happy Eyeballs V2 [[RFC8305](#)] describes techniques for performing connection racing. The Transport Services Architecture implementation from [[TAPS](#)] also describes how connections can race across interfaces and address families. In such cases, clients may use more than one ticket while racing connection attempts in order to establish one successful connection. Having multiple tickets equips clients with enough

tickets to initiate connection racing while avoiding ticket reuse and ensuring that their cache of tickets does not empty during such races. Moreover, as some servers may implement single-use tickets, distinct tickets prevent premature ticket invalidation by racing.

*Connection priming: In some systems, connections can be primed or bootstrapped by a centralized service or daemon for faster connection establishment. Requesting tickets on demand allows such services to vend tickets to clients to use for accelerated handshakes with early data. (Note that if early data is not needed by these connections, this method SHOULD NOT be used. Fresh handshakes SHOULD be performed instead.)

*Less ticket waste: Currently, TLS servers use application-specific, and often implementation-specific, logic to determine how many tickets to issue. By moving the burden of ticket count to clients, servers do not generate wasteful tickets. As an example, clients might only request one ticket during resumption. Moreover, as ticket generation might involve expensive computation, e.g., public key cryptographic operations, avoiding waste is desirable.

*Decline resumption: Clients can indicate they have no intention of resuming connections by sending a ticket request with count of zero.

3. Ticket Requests

As discussed in [Section 1](#), clients may want different numbers of tickets for fresh or resumed handshakes. Clients may indicate to servers their desired number of tickets for a single connection, in the case of a full handshake or resumption, via the following "ticket_request" extension:

```
enum {  
    ticket_request(TBD), (65535)  
} ExtensionType;
```

Clients MAY send this extension in ClientHello. It contains the following structure:

```
struct {  
    uint8 new_session_count;  
    uint8 resumption_count;  
} ClientTicketRequest;
```

new_session_count The number of tickets desired by the client when the server chooses to negotiate a fresh session (full handshake).

resumption_count

The number of tickets desired by the client when the server is willing to resume using the presented ticket.

A client starting a fresh connection SHOULD set `new_session_count` to the desired number of session tickets and `resumption_count` to 0. Once a client's ticket cache is primed, a `resumption_count` of 1 is a good choice that allows the server to replace each ticket with a fresh ticket, without over-provisioning the client with excess tickets. However, clients which race multiple connections and place a separate ticket in each will ultimately end up with just the tickets from a single resumed session. In that case, clients can send a `resumption_count` equal to the number of sessions they are attempting in parallel. (Clients which send a `resumption_count` less than the number of parallel connection attempts might end up with zero tickets.)

When a client presenting a previously obtained ticket finds that the server nevertheless negotiates a fresh session, the client SHOULD assume that any other tickets associated with the same session as the presented ticket are also no longer valid for resumption. This includes tickets obtained during the initial full handshake and all tickets subsequently obtained as part of subsequent resumptions. Requesting more than one ticket in cases when servers select a full handshake helps keep the session cache primed.

Servers SHOULD NOT send more tickets than requested for the handshake type selected by the server (resumption or full handshake). Moreover, servers SHOULD place a limit on the number of tickets they are willing to send, whether for full handshakes or resumptions, to save resources. Therefore, the number of `NewSessionTicket` messages sent will typically be the minimum of the server's self-imposed limit and the number requested. Servers MAY send additional tickets, up to the same limit, if the tickets that are originally sent are somehow invalidated.

A server which supports and uses a client "ticket_request" extension MUST also send the "ticket_request" extension in the `EncryptedExtensions` message. It contains the following structure:

```
struct {  
    uint8 expected_count;  
} ServerTicketRequestHint;
```

expected_count The number of tickets the server expects to send in this connection.

Servers MUST NOT send the "ticket_request" extension in `ServerHello` or `HelloRetryRequest` messages. A client MUST abort the connection

with an "illegal_parameter" alert if the "ticket_request" extension is present in either of these messages.

If a client receives a HelloRetryRequest, the presence (or absence) of the "ticket_request" extension MUST be maintained in the second ClientHello message. Moreover, if this extension is present, a client MUST NOT change the value of ClientTicketRequest in the second ClientHello message.

4. IANA Considerations

IANA is requested to Create an entry, ticket_request(TBD), in the existing registry for ExtensionType (defined in [[RFC8446](#)]), with "TLS 1.3" column values being set to "CH, EE", and "Recommended" column being set to "Yes".

5. Performance Considerations

Servers can send tickets in NewSessionTicket messages any time after the server Finished message (see [[RFC8446](#)]; Section 4.6.1). A server which chooses to send a large number of tickets to a client can potentially harm application performance if the tickets are sent before application data. For example, if the transport connection has a constrained congestion window, ticket messages could delay sending application data. To avoid this, servers should prioritize sending application data over tickets when possible.

6. Security Considerations

Ticket re-use is a security and privacy concern. Moreover, clients must take care when pooling tickets as a means of avoiding or amortizing handshake costs. If servers do not rotate session ticket encryption keys frequently, clients may be encouraged to obtain and use tickets beyond common lifetime windows of, e.g., 24 hours. Despite ticket lifetime hints provided by servers, clients SHOULD dispose of pooled tickets after some reasonable amount of time that mimics the ticket rotation period.

In some cases, a server may send NewSessionTicket messages immediately upon sending the server Finished message rather than waiting for the client Finished. If the server has not verified the client's ownership of its IP address, e.g., with the TLS Cookie extension (see [[RFC8446](#)]; Section 4.2.2), an attacker may take advantage of this behavior to create an amplification attack proportional to the count value toward a target by performing a key exchange over UDP with spoofed packets. Servers SHOULD limit the number of NewSessionTicket messages they send until they have verified the client's ownership of its IP address.

Servers that do not enforce a limit on the number of NewSessionTicket messages sent in response to a "ticket_request" extension could leave themselves open to DoS attacks, especially if ticket creation is expensive.

7. Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank David Benjamin, Eric Rescorla, Nick Sullivan, Martin Thomson, Hubert Kario, and other members of the TLS Working Group for discussions on earlier versions of this draft. Viktor Dukhovni contributed text allowing clients to send multiple counts in a ticket request.

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