

Ubuntu Utopic Unicorn (aka 14.10)

Long-term Ubuntu user **Ben Everard** discovers whether Deckard was a replicant.

DATA

Web
www.ubuntu.com
Developer
Canonical
Price
Free under various
licences

The biggest news about the Utopic Unicorn isn't what's included in it, but what isn't. Mir (a display server) and *Systemd* (an init system – see page 86 for much more) are both coming to Ubuntu, and they'll both have a profound effect on how it works. However, they're both going to arrive in the release after this (15.04, aka Vivid Vervet). Without these, Utopic Unicorn is a boring release in many ways. Without Mir, there's no Unity 8, so the desktop environment hasn't changed significantly from 14.04 (though it does work better on High DPI displays)

In fact, as far as desktop users are concerned, the biggest changes are the inclusion of the latest packages.

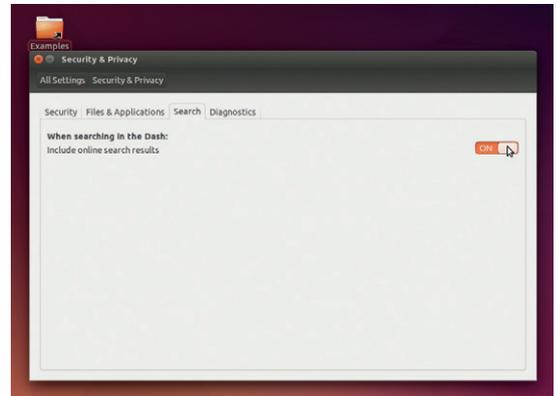
- **Linux 3.16** The kernel upgrade brings some performance improvements.
- **Firefox 33** Brings some significant performance improvements to web browsing.
- **LibreOffice 4.3** This has improved DOCX support

Other than this, the updated versions of **Libnss** means that Netflix will now work out of the box with Chrome. Unlike the previous release (Trusty Tahir aka 14.04), Utopic is not an LTS (Long Term Support)

release. This means that it will only be supported for nine months. Since releases come out every six months, this

“Anyone wanting to develop on cloud services may find that Utopic is the best distro for them.”

means that users either have to upgrade every time, use an unsupported system or switch to another distro altogether. Usually, upgrading each time isn't



Unity will still include online results in searches in the Dash – a move that angers many privacy campaigners.

a big problem, but if both *Systemd* and Mir arrive on schedule, they'll both be coming in 15.04. This means that by choosing to install 14.10, you are effectively choosing to switch to *Systemd* and Mir in a few months' time. Even if you like the idea of these technologies, the first version of a distro containing them is likely to have a few problems. Unless you're prepared to endure these problems, a more prudent approach would be to install 14.04, which will be supported until April 2019.

Developers developers developers!

There is, really, only one significant release from Canonical in 14.10, and that's the *Ubuntu Developer Tools Centre (UDTC)*. The idea behind this tool is that it will enable developers to quickly set up common development environments. The first environment is for Android development including the various tools from Google. It's not hard to set these up, but there are a few bits that need to be downloaded, and dependencies installed. *UDTC* acts like a sort of package manager that enables you download everything and set it up in one go.

This is useful – it slightly reduces the amount of work that a small minority of people will have to do after installing Ubuntu – but it's not really a killer feature. After all, not many people will even need it. We can certainly see it becoming more useful over time. For example, if it becomes easy to define the environments that get installed, you could create custom ones for particular projects so the whole team can easily stay updated, and new members could instantly get everything they need. However *UDTC* is still some way off this ideal.

If you're using Ubuntu 14.04 and like the sound of the *UDTC*, you don't need to upgrade your whole

Flavours

Of course, Ubuntu isn't just about the default version with the Unity desktop: there are seven official flavours of Ubuntu with different desktop environments. Canonical hasn't released any information about how popular they are, so we've ordered them by the number of people seeding the ISO on BitTorrent.

- **Ubuntu Gnome** The newest official flavour of Ubuntu has proved to be very popular, and shows that many Ubuntu users would like to stick with the distro's roots. Unfortunately, the release schedules of Ubuntu and Gnome just fell out of sync, so 14.10 ships with Gnome 3.12 instead of the slightly newer 3.14.
- **Kubuntu** KDE is also in for a big upgrade soon. By default, Kubuntu still ships with Plasma 4, but intrepid users can switch to

Plasma 5 and experience the future.

- **Xubuntu** Not much has changed in Xfce, but Xubuntu users can upgrade to take advantage of the latest packages.
- **Lubuntu LXDE** only gets some bugfixes this version, as most of the development is going into LXQt. This is another distro with a big change coming up.
- **Ubuntu Kylin** The Chinese version of Ubuntu comes with a more tweaks than just the language. For example, *WPS Office* ships as the office suite because it's more popular than *LibreOffice* in China.
- **Ubuntu Studio** As well as the usual raft of changes, the new kernel brings ALSA support for firewire devices.
- **Mythbuntu** This hasn't released a 14.10 version as there weren't enough changes to make the non-LTS release worthwhile.