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All issues discussed are captured in the document, either as comments or resolved issues.

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# Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) and IEC (the International Electrotechnical Commission) form the specialized system for worldwide standardization. National bodies that are members of ISO or IEC participate in the development of International Standards through technical committees established by the respective organization to deal with particular fields of technical activity. ISO and IEC technical committees collaborate in fields of mutual interest. Other international organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO and IEC, also take part in the work. In the field of information technology, ISO and IEC have established a joint technical committee, ISO/IEC JTC 1.

International Standards are drafted in accordance with the rules given in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2.

The main task of the joint technical committee is to prepare International Standards. Draft International Standards adopted by the joint technical committee are circulated to national bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the national bodies casting a vote.

In exceptional circumstances, when the joint technical committee has collected data of a different kind from that which is normally published as an International Standard (“state of the art”, for example), it may decide to publish a Technical Report. A Technical Report is entirely informative in nature and shall be subject to review every five years in the same manner as an International Standard.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO and IEC shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

ISO/IEC TR 24772-11, was prepared by Joint Technical Committee ISO/IEC JTC 1, *Information technology*, Subcommittee SC 22, *Programming languages, their environments and system software interfaces*.

# Introduction

This Technical Report provides guidance for the programming language Java, so that application developers considering Java or using Java will be better able to avoid the programming constructs that lead to vulnerabilities in software written in the Java language and their attendant consequences. This guidance can also be used by developers to select source code evaluation tools that can discover and eliminate some constructs that could lead to vulnerabilities in their software. This report can also be used in comparison with companion Technical Reports and with the language-independent report, TR 24772–1, to select a programming language that provides the appropriate level of confidence that anticipated problems can be avoided.

This technical report part is intended to be used with TR 24772–1, which discusses programming language vulnerabilities in a language independent fashion.

It should be noted that this Technical Report is inherently incomplete. It is not possible to provide a complete list of programming language vulnerabilities because new weaknesses are discovered continually. Any such report can only describe those that have been found, characterized, and determined to have sufficient probability and consequence.

**Information Technology — Programming Languages — Guidance to avoiding vulnerabilities in programming languages — Vulnerability descriptions for the programming language Java**

# 1. Scope

This Technical Report specifies software programming language vulnerabilities to be avoided in the development of systems where assured behaviour is required for security, safety, mission-critical and business-critical software. In general, this guidance is applicable to the software developed, reviewed, or maintained for any application.

Vulnerabilities described in this Technical Report document the way that the vulnerability described in the language-independent TR 24772–1 are manifested in Java

# 2. Normative references

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

The Java Language Specification, Java SE 10 Edition, 2018-02-20, https://docs.oracle.com/javase/specs/

# 3. Terms and definitions, symbols and conventions

## 3.1 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO/IEC 2382, in TR 24772–1, the Oracle Java Glossary (<https://www.oracle.com/technetwork/java/glossary-135216.html>) and the following apply. Other terms are defined where they appear in *italic* type.

The following terms are in alphabetical order, with general topics referencing the relevant specific terms.

**3.1.1**

**access**

read or modify the value of an object

Note: Modify includes the case where the new value being stored is the same as the previous value. Expressions that are not evaluated do not access objects.

**3.1.2**

**behaviour**   
external appearance or action

Note: See: implementation-defined behaviour, undefined behaviour, unspecified behaviour

**3.1.3**

**bit**  
unit of data storage in the execution environment large enough to hold an object that may have one of two values

Note: It need not be possible to express the address of each individual bit of an object.

**3.1.4**

**byte**  
addressable unit of data storage large enough to hold any member of the basic character set of the execution environment

Note: It is possible to express the address of each individual byte of an object uniquely. A byte is composed of a contiguous sequence of bits, the number of which is implementation-defined. The least significant bit is called the low-order bit; the most significant bit is called the high-order bit.

**3.1.5**

**character**  
abstract member of a set of elements used for the organization, control, or representation of data

**3.1.6**

**correctly rounded result**

representation in the result format that is nearest in value, subject to the current rounding mode, to what the result would be given unlimited range and precision.

**3.1.7**

**implementation**

particular set of software, running in a particular translation environment under particular control options, that performs translation of programs for, and supports execution of functions in, a particular execution environment.

**3.1.8**

**implementation-defined behaviour**

behaviour where multiple options are permitted by the standard and where each implementation documents how the choice is made

**3.1.9**

**implementation-defined value**

value not specified in the standard where each implementation documents how the choice for the value is selected

**3.1.10**

**implementation limit**

restriction imposed upon programs by the implementation

**3.1.11**

**memory location**

object of scalar type, or a maximal sequence of adjacent bit-fields all having nonzero width

**3.1.12**

**multibyte character**

sequence of one or more bytes representing a member of the extended character set of either the source or the execution environment, where the extended character set is a superset of the basic character set

**3.1.13**

**undefined behaviour**

use of a non-portable or erroneous program construct or of erroneous data

Note: Undefined behaviour ranges from ignoring the situation completely with unpredictable results, to behaving during translation or program execution in a documented manner characteristic of the environment (with or without the issuance of a diagnostic message), to terminating a translation or execution (with the issuance of a diagnostic message).

**3.1.14**

**unspecified behaviour**

use of an unspecified value, or other behaviour where the language standard provides two or more possibilities and imposes no further requirements on which is chosen in any instance

Note: For example, unspecified behaviour is the order in which the arguments of a function are evaluated.

# 4. Language concepts

Java was originally developed at Sun Microsystems (acquired by Oracle Corporation in 2010) in the early 1990’s. Java was initially defined as a syntactic superset of the C programming language: adding object oriented features such as classes, encapsulation, dynamic dispatch, namespaces and templates. It was designed to be platform independent through the use of platform independent byte code which is then interpreted by the Java Virtual Machine (JVM) on whichever platform it is executed on. Java espoused the Write Once, Run Anywhere (WORA) goal.

While there is a core of Java that is syntactically identical to C, it has always been the case that there are significant differences between the two. Since Java was developed, the two languages have diverged even further, both adding features not present in the other. Notwithstanding that, there is still a significant syntactic and semantic overlap between C and Java.

At its core, Java was designed to address some weaknesses that existed in other languages through the addition of security management features. Some key features of Java are:

* Java uses a Garbage Collector to manage memory without the use of explicit commands to erase memory or to aggregate freed space.
* Java provides ease of code reuse through inheritance.
* The javac compiler transforms Java code into byte code instead of into machine executable instructions. The byte code is then interpreted and run by a Java Virtual Machine (JVM) on a particular platform.
* Classes provide single inheritance of specifications and code.
* Interfaces provide multiple inheritance of specifications.

Subsequently, in many cases, the additional features of Java provide mechanisms for avoiding vulnerabilities based in memory management and other areas that are susceptible to language misuse, and these are reflected in the following sections.

Java does have some inherently unsafe features. For instance, as its name implies, sun.misc.Unsafe is considered unsafe for general use, though it does provide some low level programming features such as reinterpretation of data. Documentation is not widely available and its use is usually reliant on miscellaneous web postings, which leads to even more unsafe use.

# 5. Avoiding programming language vulnerabilities in Java

In addition to the generic programming rules from ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 5.4, additional rules from this section apply specifically to the Java programming language. The recommendations of this section are restatements of recommendations from clause 6, but represent ones stated frequently, or that are considered as particularly noteworthy by the authors. Clause 6 of this document contains the full set of recommendations, as well as explanations of the problems that led to the recommendations made.

Every guidance provided in this section, and in the corresponding Part section, is supported by material in Clause 6 of this document, as well as other important recommendations.

***TBD***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Index |  | Reference |
| 1 | Access all private data components only through getter and setter methods. For class-based enums, ensure that enum values are not mutable by making members in an enum type private, by setting the members in the constructor and by not providing setter methods. | 6.61 Concurrent data access [CGX] |
| 2 | Check the value of a larger type before converting it to a smaller type to see if the value in the larger type is within the range of the smaller type. Use comments to document cases where intentional loss of data due to narrowing is expected and acceptable. | 6.6 Conversion errors [FLC] |
| 3 | Use defensive programming techniques to check whether an operation will overflow or underflow the receiving data type. These techniques can be omitted if it can be shown by static analysis (e.g. at compile time) that overflow or underflow is not possible. | 6.15 Arithmetic wrap-around error [FIF] |
| 4 | Include checks for null prior to making use of objects. Less preferably, handle exceptions raised by attempts to dereference null values. | 6.13 Null pointer dereference [XYH] |
| 5 | Mark all variables observable by another thread or hardware agent as volatile. | 6.18 Dead store [WXQ] |
| 6 | Ensure that when the identifier that a method uses is identical to an identifier in the class that the correct identifier is used through the use or non-use of “this”. | 6.20 Identifier name reuse [YOW] |
| 7 | Avoid the use of expressions with side effects for multiple parameters to functions, since the order in which the parameters are evaluated and hence the side effects occur is unspecified. | 6.32 Passing parameters and return values [CSJ] |
| 8 | Use *try-with-resources* which extends the behaviour of the try/catch construct to allow access to resources without having to close them afterwards as the resource closures are done automatically. | 6.36 Ignored error status and unhandled exceptions [OYB] |
| 9 | Enable verbose garbage collection to see a detailed trace of the garbage collector actions. Reduce the number of temporary objects to minimize the impact and need for garbage collection. Enable verbose garbage collection and profiling to locate and fix memory leaks to reduce need for garbage collection. | 6.39 Memory leaks and heap fragmentation [XYL] |
| 10 | Use Java profiler tools that monitor and diagnose memory leaks. | 6.39 Memory leaks and heap fragmentation [XYL] |
| 11 | Keep the inheritance graph as shallow as possible to simplify the review of inheritance relationships and method overridings. | 6.41 Inheritance [RIP] |
| 12 | Be aware that native code can lack many of the protections afforded by Java such as bounds checks on structures not being performed on native methods and explicitly perform the necessary checks. Use a foreign function interface such as JNI to provide a clear separation between Java and the other language.  Minimize the use of those issues known to be error-prone when interfacing between languages, such as:   1. passing character strings 2. dimension, bounds and layout issues of arrays 3. interfacing with other parameter mechanisms such as call by reference, value or name 4. handling faults, exceptions and errors, and 5. bit representation. | 6.47 Inter-language calling [DJS] |
| 13 | Always have an appropriate response for checked exceptions since even things that should never happen do happen occasionally. | 6.50 Unanticipated exceptions from library routines [HJW] |
| 14 | Use the Java ExecutorService framework for thread group management. | 6.62 Concurrency – Premature termination [CGS] |

# 6. Specific Guidance for Java Vulnerabilities

## 6.1 General

This clause contains specific advice for Java about the possible presence of vulnerabilities as described in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019, and provides specific guidance on how to avoid them in Java code. This section mirrors ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6 in that the vulnerability “Type System [IHN]” is found in 6.2 of ISO/IEC TR 24772–1, and Java specific guidance is found in clause 6.2 and its subclauses in this document.

## 6.2 Type System [IHN]

### 6.2.1 Applicability to language

Java is a statically typed language. Java is also a strongly typed language as it requires all variables to be typed and places restrictions on the values that a variable can hold. There are two categories of types in Java: primitive types and reference types. Primitive types are boolean, byte, short, int, long, char, float, *enum*  and double. Reference types are the class, interface and array types.

When performing an arithmetic operation composed of all integers, all operands are first converted to an int. If all of the operands are floating point, all operands are first converted to the double type. When performing operations with mixed data types, the smaller type is converted to a larger type. For instance, adding a short to an int results in the short being upsized to an int before the operation is performed. Java requires explicit casting when going from a larger primitive type to a smaller one. Implicit casting is allowed when going from a smaller primitive type to a larger one, even though precision may be lost in the conversion. This and other type conversion vulnerabilities are discussed in more depth in sections 6.6 Conversion errors [FLC], 6.15 Arithmetic wrap-around error [FIF], and 6.44 Polymorphic variables [BKK].

For reference types, no explicit cast is required when assigning a child type object to a parent type; however an explicit cast is required when assigning a parent type variable to child type variable. A ClassCastException will be thrown at runtime unless the parent type reference variable is referring to the child object.

The vulnerability documented in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 relating to the ability to distinguish integer types representing different physical units (such as meters or feet) exists in Java. It can be mitigated by generating distinct classes for each dimensional type and creating operators and conversion methods that correctly perform the conversations.

**6.2.2 Guidance to language users**

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.6.5.
* Consider using classes instead of base types for values with physical properties, such as weight or size.

## 6.3 Bit representations [STR]

### 6.3.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerabilities described in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.3 apply to Java.

Java supports a variety of sizes for integers such as byte, short, int, and long, but Java only supports signed integer types. This simplifies the understanding and use of integer types, however, Java supports unsigned arithmetic using static methods in class Integer. The result of the unsigned arithmetic is an unsigned integer. No mixed operations are provided.

Java also supports a variety of bitwise operators that facilitate bit manipulations, such as left and right shifts and bitwise & and |. Some of these bit manipulations can cause unexpected results. For instance, Java differentiates between a signed right shift and an unsigned right shift. The signed right shift is performed using the operator “>>” whereas the unsigned right shift is performed using the operator “>>>”. Although Java has simplified its language by only having signed integers, it has relegated the issue of whether the sign bit is shifted right to the choice of operator. It is easy to confuse the two operators “>>” and “>>>” and do a signed right shift instead of an unsigned right shift or vice versa. For instance,

int a, b, c, d;

a = 0b00101000; // a = 0010 0100

b = a >> 3; // signed right shift yields b = 0000 0100

c = 0b11110100; // c = 1111 0100

d = c >> 3; // signed right shift of a negative number yields d = 1111 1110

int e, f, g, h;

e = 0b00101000; // e = 0010 1000

f = e >>> 3; // unsigned right shift yields f = 0000 0101

g = 0b11110100; // g = 1111 0100

h = g >>> 3; // unsigned right shift of a negative number yields h = 0001 1110

Another issue that may arise is that Java stores data in big-endian format, also known as network byte order. This can cause issues when interfacing with little endian languages such as C.

### 6.3.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.3.5.
* Ensure that the unsigned and signed right shift operators are not confused with each other.
* Avoid manipulating numbers using unsigned arithmetic operations in class Integer.
* Use java.nio.ByteBuffer to convert byte order between little endian to big endian.

## 6.4 Floating-point arithmetic [PLF]

### 6.4.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerability described in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.4 applies to Java.

Java implements a subset of ISO/IEC/IEEE 60559:2011 Floating-point arithmetic.

Java permits the floating-point data types float and double. Due to the approximate nature of floating-point representations, the use of floating-point data types in situations where equality is to be tested or where rounding could accumulate over multiple iterations may lead to unexpected results and potential vulnerabilities. Instead of testing equality, comparison against a threshold will yield the intended effect, for example:

final double THRESHOLD = .00001;

double f1,f2;

// … assignments and operations on f1 and f2

if (Math.abs(f1 - f2) < THRESHOLD){

. . .

}

As with most data types, Java is flexible in how float and double can be used. For instance, Java allows the use of floating-point types to be used as loop counters and in equality statements, even though in some cases these will not have the expected behaviour. For example:

float x;

for (x=0f; x!=1f; x+=0.0000001){

. . .

}

may or may not terminate after 10,000,000 iterations. The representations used for x and the accumulated effect of many iterations may cause x to not be identical to 1.0 causing the loop to continue to iterate forever.

Similarly, the Boolean test

float x=1.336f;

float y=2.672f;

if (x == (y/2)){

. . .

}

may or may not evaluate to true. Given that x and y are constant values, it is expected that consistent results will be achieved on the same platform. However, it is questionable whether the logic performs as expected when a float that is twice that of another is tested for equality when divided by 2 as above.

Overflow in Java yields Infinity and underflow yields 0.0. In neither case is an exception raised.

Floating point operations are platform dependent. Different platforms can yield different results. To counter this problem, Java introduced the strictfp keyword. The strictfp modifier ensures that all floating point operations yield the same result across different JVMs and platforms. For example:

public class FloatingSum {

public strictfp float sum() {

float num1 = 5e+7;

float num2 = 3e+9;

return (num1 + num2);

}

public static strictfp void main(String[] args) {

FloatingSum t = new FloatingSum();

System.out.println (t.sum());

}

}

Sometimes very high precision is necessary in calculations. Multiple calculations that exacerbate imprecise calculations and platform differences can cause unexpected results. To achieve higher precision and more predictable performance, the Java class BigDecimal provides a variety of rounding choices to give better control over rounding behavior.

### 6.4.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.4.5.
* Use thresholds in comparisons in lieu of equality.
* Use the strictfp keyword to ensure consistent floating point results across different JVMs and platforms.
* If possible, use integers instead of floating point numbers.
* Use the BigDecimal class to provide better precision such as for monetary or financial calculations and to mitigate rounding issues, when performing high precision arithmetic or where more granular control is needed by.

## 6.5 Enumerator issues [CCB]

### 6.5.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerability of arrays indexed by enumerations discussed in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.5 does not exist in Java since arrays in Java can only be indexed by int values. The vulnerabilities related to user-provided encodings do not exist in Java since the enumerator capability does not rely upon a user-provided encoding. Also, because enum constants are associated with a specific type, the vulnerability associated with the mapping of enums to integer types is absent in Java.

The enumerator capability provided by Java has its own set of vulnerabilities, discussed here.

Enums in Java can be done outside of a class or as part of a class. The basic enum type (outside of a class enum) comprises a set of named discrete constant values as in the example:

public enum Weekday {SUNDAY, MONDAY, TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY, FRIDAY, SATURDAY};

Each of the keywords must be unique. Enum constants are implicitly static and final and cannot be changed once created. The basic enum type in Java does not contain any public fields or any methods that change state, so the basic enum is immutable and cannot be changed.

Jave arrays may be indexed by enums, and the case construct may be created over an enum type. (???)

For the second enum type, Jave provides java.lang.Enum and enum declarations define a class called *enum type* which implicitly extend java.lang.Enum. Java enum types thus have fields and methods. A more extensive example from the Java Joda.org date and time classes provides an illustration of the associated methods for an enum:

public enum Month implements TemporalAccessor, TemporalAdjuster {

JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH, APRIL,

MAY, JUNE, JULY, AUGUST,

SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, DECEMBER;

private static final Month[] ENUMS = Month.values();

public static Month of(int month) {

if (month < 1 || month > 12) {

throw new DateTimeException("Invalid value for MonthOfYear: " + month);

}

return ENUMS[month - 1];

}

// additional methods…

}

However, the flexibility that Java offers with enum types can lead to issues as the following illustrates:

public enum Sea {

BERING (2261060,3937),

// ...

MEDITERRANEAN (2509698,5267);

private int area;

public int maxDepth; // Public

Continent(int area, int maxDepth) {

// ...

}

public void setArea(int area) { // Allows modification of private field

this.area = area;

}

}

When enum fields are public, Java allows them to be mutable. This can lead to unexpected consequences such as accidental or malicious changes to the object, while users expect enums to be immutable. Fields in an enum should be private, set in the constructor, and have no setter methods.

Java 12 added the notion of a switch expression. A switch expression chooses the correct case label and returns the selected value. Since this expression cannot execute multiple statements, no break statement is permitted in the construct.

### 6.5.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance from ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.5.5.
* For class-based enums, ensure that enum values are not mutable by making members in an enum type private, by setting the members in the constructor and by not providing setter methods.
* Set all enum fields to be final.
* Use an enum type to select from a limited set of choices to make possible the use of tools to detect omissions of possible values such as in switch statements.

## 6.6 Conversion errors [FLC]

### 6.6.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerability described in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.6 applies to Java, although the consequences are mitigated by checks in the language. In Java, automatic type conversion is permitted if both types are compatible and the target type is wider than the source type so there can be no loss of data.

In Java, automatic type conversion is permitted if both types are compatible and the target type is larger than the source type so there can be no loss of data. From the smallest to the largest capacity is the order: byte, short, char, int, long, float, and double. For example, a byte can be implicitly cast to any of the others since all of the others have a larger capacity, but a float can only be implicitly cast to a double since there could be a loss of data if a float is cast to something smaller, such as an int.

There are 19 possible instances of widening primitive conversions in Java. These are:

* byte to short, int, long, float, or double
* short to int, long, float, or double
* char to int, long, float, or double
* int to long, float, or double
* long to float or double
* float to double

Though a floating point number can store larger numbers than an integer, precision could still be lost when converting an int to a long or a float, or from a long to a double. Because of the way floating point numbers are stored, the least significant bits can be lost in the conversion. Converting from the smaller integral types such as a short to a floating point type, or a conversion from an int to a double will not result in a loss of precision.

Going in the opposite direction from a larger type to a smaller type requires explicit casting. Though there must be explicit casting, the use of explicit casting does not prevent either the production of an incorrect truncated value or the loss of precision (from floating-point) in the conversion. A long containing a value not representable in int will yield an incorrect value when explicitly downcast to an int. Data can be lost when a float is explicitly downcast to an int.

The vulnerabilities from ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.6 related to the loss of values due to narrowing apply to Java. Also, the vulnerabilities related to implicit change of units or sets of values with maximums and minimums being exceeded but not generating exceptions also apply.

There are 22 possible instances of narrowing primitive conversions in Java where a potential loss of precision could occur. These are:

* short to byte or char
* char to byte or short
* int to byte, short, or char
* long to byte, short, char, or int
* float to byte, short, char, int, or long
* double to byte, short, char, int, long, or float

The use of an incorrect result of a downcast as an out-of-range index value will result in an exception. Thus the vulnerabilities associated with out-of-range indexing cannot happen in Java. The vulnerability associated with unhandled exceptions is discussed in clause 6.36 Ignored error status and unhandled exceptions. Behaviours such as termination of the executable or denial-of-service remain.

**6.6.2 Guidance to language users**

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.6.5.
* Check the value of a larger type before converting it to a smaller type to see if the value in the larger type is within the range of the smaller type.
* Use comments to document cases where intentional loss of data due to narrowing is expected and acceptable.
* Be aware that conversion from certain integral types to floating types can result in a loss of the least significant bits.

## 6.7 String termination [CJM]

### 6.7.1 Applicability to language

This vulnerability does not apply to Java, because Java does not use a string termination character.

## 6.8 Buffer boundary violation (buffer overflow) [HCB]

### 6.8.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerabilities from buffer boundary violation documented in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.8 resulting in undefined behaviours do not apply to Java, because Java has inherent protections in the language to prevent buffer boundary violations. The vulnerabilities associated with denial of service or termination of the program are possible, depending upon how related exceptions are handled. See 6.36 Ignored error status and unhandled exceptions [OYB].

## 6.9 Unchecked array indexing [XYZ]

### 6.9.1 Applicability to language

This vulnerability described in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.9 does not apply to Java, because Java performs explicit out-of-bounds checks and raises an exception if the bounds are violated.. The vulnerabilities associated with denial of service or termination of the program are possible, depending upon how related exceptions are handled. See clause 6.36 Ignored error status and unhandled exceptions [OYB].

## 6.10 Unchecked array copying [XYW]

### 6.10.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerability described in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.10 does not apply to Java, because Java performs explicit range checks and raises an exception if the ranges are not compatible. The vulnerabilities associated with denial of service or termination of the program are possible, depending upon how related exceptions are handled. See clause 6.36 Ignored error status and unhandled exceptions [OYB].

## 6.11 Pointer type conversions [HFC]

### 6.11.1 Applicability to language

With the exception of conversions of references (Java’s equivalent to pointers) along the inheritance hierarchies, which are described in clause 6.44, the vulnerability described in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.11 does not apply to Java, since no other conversions between references are permitted.

## 6.12 Pointer arithmetic [RVG]

### 6.12.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerability described in ISO/IEC TR 62443-1 clause 6.12 does not apply to Java, because Java does not permit arithmetic on references.

## 6.13 Null pointer dereference [XYH]

### 6.13.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerability described in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.13 applies to Java. Prior to making use of a reference to an object, verification needs to be made to ensure that the reference is not null. This can be accomplished through an explicit runtime check or other means of ensuring a reference is not null. Though a null dereference is mitigated in Java by compile-time or run-time checks that ensure that no null-value can be dereferenced, it is better to not rely exclusively on catching the exceptions. The exception NullPointerException is implicitly raised upon such dereferencing and needs to be handled or else the vulnerability of a failing system or components prevails.

An alternative mechanism available since Java 8 called Optional can be used to encapsulate the potential null values safely to avoid generating a null pointer exception. This class returns the value present if there is a valid value, or absent if the reference would be null to let one deal with null values without raising an exception.

### 6.13.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.13.5.
* Include checks for null prior to making use of objects. Less preferably, handle exceptions raised by attempts to dereference null values.
* Consider using the Optional class (java.util.Optional) to handle objects as present or absent instead of checking for null values.

## 6.14 Dangling reference to heap [XYK]

### 6.14.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerability described in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.14 does not apply to Java, because in Java an object’s lifetime is controlled by the references to the object. Deallocation is only done by the garbage collector if no references to the object exist. If any reference still exists, the object will still exist.

## 6.15 Arithmetic wrap-around error [FIF]

### 6.15.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerability described in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.15 exists in Java. Given the fixed size of integer data types, continuously adding a positive value to an integer eventually results in a value that cannot be represented in the space allocated. For Java, this is defined as an overflow. The integer operators do not indicate overflow, so the potential exists for unexpected, meaningless or incorrect arithmetic results as a result of the overflow.

Similarly, repeatedly subtracting from an integer leads to underflow. The integer operators also do not indicate underflow in any way.

For example, consider the following code for an integer operation:

int foo( int i ) {

i++;

  return i;

}

Calling foo with the value of 2147483647 results in i containing the value of -2147483648 after the i++ statement. Continuing execution using such a value could result in unexpected results such as overflowing a buffer and erroneous operation. The programmer may have been unaware that the value was getting too big to represent in the allocated space. As it is impossible for the compiler or an analysis tool to determine whether overflowing the variable is the expected behaviour, code should be annotated using comments if wrap-around is expected.

### 6.15.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.15.5.
* Use defensive programming techniques to check whether an operation will overflow or underflow the receiving data type. For example
  + Check that an operation on an integer value will not cause wrapping, unless it can be shown that wrapping cannot occur. Any of the following operators have the potential to wrap:

a + b a – b a \* b a++ ++a a-- --a

a += b a -= b a \*= b a << b a<<=b -a

* + Check that an operation on a floating point value will not cause an overflow or underflow, unless it can be shown that either cannot occur. Any of the following operators have the potential to overflow or underflow:

a + b a – b a \* b a/b a%b a++ ++a a--

--a a += b a -= b a \*= b a /= b a %= b a << b

a <<= b -a

These techniques can be omitted if it can be shown by static analysis (e.g. at compile time) that overflow or underflow is not possible.

## 6.16 Using shift operations for multiplication and division [PIK]

### 6.16.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerability described in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.16 exists in Java. Often the use of a shift operator as a substitute for the use of the multiplication and division operators is to increase performance. The Java Virtual Machine (JVM) usually performs such optimizations automatically, and can optimize for the current platform. Therefore, there usually is not any difference in performance in the program execution when using a shift operator instead of a multiplication or division operator.

Java provides three shift operators: << (left shift), >> (signed right shift), and >>> (unsigned right shift). The signed right shift and the unsigned right shift will produce identical results for positive integers. However, for negative numbers, the two results will be different.

The left operand must be of type int or long. If the type of the left operand is of type byte, short or char, then the left operand is promoted to type int. Since the promotion performs a sign extension, an unsigned right shift could cause the result of the shift to be an unexpected large positive integer.

Incorrect use of the shift operators could lead to incorrect arithmetic, buffer overruns and incorrect loops.

### 6.16.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.16.5.

Also see, [*6.15 Arithmetic Wrap-around Error [FIF]*](#_6.15_Arithmetic_wrap-around_1)*.*

* Include both positive and negative values in any testing of calculations involving right shifts to ensure correct operation.

## 6.17 Choice of clear names [NAI]

### 6.17.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerability described in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.17 exists in Java. The possible confusion of names with typographically similar characters is not specific to Java, but Java is as prone to it as any other language. Depending upon the local character set, avoid having names that only differ by characters that may be confused, such as ‘O’ and ‘0’ or ‘I’ and ‘l’.

For Java, the maximum significant name length does not have a limit. Very long names can be problematic from the standpoint of readability and maintainability even if Java does not impose a limit.

This issue is related to *6.20 Identifier name reuse [YOW]*, as they are both mechanisms by which the programmer may inadvertently use an object other than the one intended. This can lead to user confusion regarding variables and incorrect programming results.

### 6.17.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.17.5.
* Use names that are clear and non-confusing.
* Use consistency in choosing names.
* Use names that are appropriate to the scope of the code being written, such as short meaningful names for small constructs that involve only local scope and more meaningful names when non-local classes, or methods are being accessed.
* Choose names that are rich in meaning.

## 6.18 Dead store [WXQ]

### 6.18.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerability described in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.18 exists in Java. Because Java is an imperative language, programs in Java can contain dead stores (memory locations that are written but never subsequently read or overwritten without an intervening read). This can result from an error in the initial design or implementation of a program, or from an incomplete or erroneous modification of an existing program. However, it may also be intended behaviour, for example when initializing a sparse array. It may be more efficient to clear the entire array to zero, then to assign the non-zero values, so the presence of dead stores should be regarded as a warning of a possible error, rather than an actual error.

The Java keyword volatile indicates to the compiler that the variable should not be cached since its value may be changed by entities outside of the scope of the program or by concurrent threads. A store into a volatile variable is not considered a dead store because accessing such a variable may cause additional side effects, such as input/output (memory-mapped I/O) or observability by a debugger or another thread of execution.

### 6.18.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.18.5.
* Use compilers and analysis tools to identify potential dead stores in the program.
* Mark all variables observable by another thread or hardware agent as volatile, also see *6.61 Concurrent data access [CGX].*

## 6.19 Unused variable [YZS]

### 6.19.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerability described in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.19 exists in Java. Variables may be declared, but never used when writing code or the need for a variable may be eliminated in the code, but the declaration may remain. Most Java compilers will report this as a warning and the warning can be easily resolved by removing the unused variable.

### 6.19.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.19.5.
* Resolve all compiler warnings for unused variables. Having an unused variable in code indicates that either warnings were turned off during compilation or were ignored by the developer.

## 6.20 Identifier name reuse [YOW]

### 6.20.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerability described in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.20 applies to Java. In Java, as in most languages, nested blocks create nested scopes. Moreover, methods in classes create nested scopes. The usual hiding rule applies to two identically named variables at different levels in these scopes.

Java does allow local variables in a subclass to have the same name as a superclass, as in:

class ExampleClass1 {

public static void main(String[] args) {

int i;

class Local {

int i;

{

for (int i = 0; i < 10; i++){

System.out.println(i);

}

}

}

new Local();

}

}

Although each of these situations likely resulted from decisions in designing Java that balanced alternatives, such as the need to avoid renaming local variables when such variables were in use in a superclass, these situations can cause issues when performing even routine maintenance such as accidental rebinds after maintenance changes. Variables that are distinct could become intermingled if careful consideration of the scope of the variables is not considered.

Java allows scoping so that a variable that is not declared within a method may be resolved to the class. To differentiate between the class member and a locally declared entity, Java provides the keyword this as shown in the following example:

public class usernameExample {

private String username;

public void setName(String username) {

this.username = username;

}

}

The keyword “this” allows the “this.username” to indicate that “username” refers to the class variable “username” instead of the method variable “username”. In the following example:

public class usernameExample {

private String username;

private String oldName;

public void setName(String username) {

oldName = username;

this.username = username;

}

}

“oldName” is assigned to the method variable “username” when the programmer intended to assign oldName to the existing username before replacement (this.username).

Reuse of any publicly visible identifiers, public utility classes, interfaces, or packages in the Java Standard Library can cause confusion. For instance, naming an identifier, Timer, the same name as the public class java.util.Timer can cause confusion. Future maintainers of the code may not be aware that the identifier Timer refers to a custom class instead of the public class.

### 6.20.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.20.5.
* Ensure that when the identifier that a method uses is identical to an identifier in the class that the correct identifier is used through the use or non-use of “this”.
* Choose unique names for any publicly visible identifiers, public utility classes, interfaces and packages.

## 6.21 Namespace issues [BJL]

The vulnerability described in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.21 does not apply to Java since the importation of equally named entities are diagnosed as ambiguous by the compiler, making qualification of the names upon access mandatory.

Packages are one way that namespace issues can be handled when using the same name for two different classes. Should, for example, two classes have the same name, but in different packages as shown here:

com.app1.model (package)

…

Device (class)

...

com.app2.data (package)

…

Device (class)

...

If these two packages are both imported, then this requires either a name change of the Device class or the use of the full package and class name when referencing them.

An identical rule applies to when two or more interfaces with equally named static constants are inherited. The use of the constant must be qualified by the interface name.

## 6.22 Initialization of variables [LAV]

### 6.22.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerability described in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.22 related to initialization in a method does not apply to Java. Java requires that every variable in a program be initialized before it is used. With the exception of local variables, Java will assign a default value to variables that are not explicitly initialized. Local variables are not assigned a default value, though the compiler will ensure that each is initialized before use and report an error that a variable might not have been initialized if the compiler cannot determine that a variable has been initialized before use.

The vulnerability described in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.22 related to circular dependencies does exists in Java. Java does have the problem of circular dependency. If a class A, which has class B’s Object, and class B is also composed of Object of class A, there is an issue of circular dependency. Upon execution, the circular dependency will cause memory to be exhausted and a StackOverflowError to occur.

### 6.22.2 Guidance to language users

* Avoid circular dependency if possible.
* To remove a circular dependency between objects A and B, create a proxy for one of them and derive that object from the proxy to remove the circular dependency.

## 6.23 Operator precedence and associativity [JCW]

### 6.23.1 Applicability to language

T The vulnerability described in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.23 exists in Java. The order of operator precedence for Java is well defined and is listed below in order from highest to lowest precedence.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Operator Precedence** | |
| **Operators** | **Precedence** |
| postfix | *expr*++ *expr*-- |
| unary | ++*expr* --*expr* +*expr* -*expr* ~ ! |
| multiplicative | \* / % |
| additive | + - |
| shift | << >> >>> |
| relational | < > <= >= instanceof |
| equality | == != |
| bitwise AND | & |
| bitwise exclusive OR | ^ |
| bitwise inclusive OR | | |
| logical AND | && |
| logical OR | || |
| ternary | ? : |
| assignment | = += -= \*= /= %= &= ^= |= <<= >>= >>>= |

As shown in the table above, operator precedence and associativity in Java are clearly defined, and mixing logical and arithmetic operations is allowed without parentheses. However, the language has more than 40 operators with the levels of precedence shown, and experience has shown that even experienced programmers do not always get the interpretation of complex expressions correct.

### 6.23.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.23.5.
* Use parentheses when combining operations in an expression to unambiguously specify the programmer’s intent.

## 6.24 Side-effects and order of evaluation of operands [SAM]

### 6.24.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerability described in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.24 exists in Java since Java allows methods and expressions to have side effects. The vulnerability is significantly mitigated by Java’s prescribed left-to-right evaluation order, so that the occurrence of side effects is deterministic.

If two or more side effects modify the same expression as in:

int[] array={10,20,30,40,50,60};

int i=2;

/\* … \*/

i = array[i++]; // outcome is i == 30

the behaviour is undefined. Though the rules of Java concerning side effects is fairly straightforward, it can be confusing such as in:

int i = 2;

int j = (i=3) \* i;

System.out.println(j);

The assignment of i=3 will occur first, and then the expression j=i\*i; will be evaluated, leading to the printing out of 9.

Side effects, including assignments, in an argument to && may create an issue, for example in the following if statement:

if ( (aVar == 10) && (++i < 25)){

// do something

}

Should aVar not be equal to 10, then the if statement cannot be true, so the second half of the condition  
 (++i < 25) will not be evaluated and thus i will not be incremented. Testing may give the false impression that the code is working, when it could just be that the values provided cause evaluations to be performed in a particular order that causes side effects to occur as expected.

Assert statements in Javaare used as a diagnostic tool to test assumptions about a program. Assert statements should not contain side effects since although assert statements are enabled by default, the assert statements can be disabled as part of the build process. This could change the program results since the assert statements would not be executed if the assert statements are disabled.

### 6.24.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.24.5.
* Do not embed ++, --, etc. in other expressions.
* Simplify expressions to reduce or eliminate side effects, to avoid potential confusion and to improve maintainability.
* Do not have side effects in assert statements.

## 6.25 Likely incorrect expression [KOA]

### 6.25.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerability described in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.25 exists in Java. Java has several instances of operators which are similar in structure, but vastly different in meaning, for example confusing the comparison operator “==” with assignment “=”. Using an expression that is syntactically correct, but which may just be a null statement can lead to unexpected results. Consider:

int x, y;

/\* … \*/

if (x = y){

/\* … \*/

}

A fair amount of analysis may need to be done to determine whether the programmer intended to do an assignment as part of the if statement (valid in Java) or whether the programmer made the common mistake of using an “=” instead of a “==”. In order to prevent this confusion, it is suggested that any assignments in contexts that are easily misunderstood be moved outside of the Boolean expression. This would change the example code to the semantically equivalent:

int x,y;

/\* … \*/

x = y;

if (x != 0) {

/\* … \*/

}

This would clearly state what the programmer meant and that the assignment of y to x was intended.

Confusion of “==” and the equals() method can also cause problems. Consider:

int a=5;

int b=5;

if (a==b) {

System.out.println(“a==b is TRUE”);

}

In this case, “a==b is TRUE” will be printed since the values contained in a and b are the same. However, in the following example:

String obj1 = new String("xyz");

String obj2 = new String("xyz");

if (obj1 == obj2)

{

System.out.println("obj1==obj2 is TRUE");

}

else

{

System.out.println("obj1==obj2 is FALSE");

}

“obj1==obj2 is FALSE” will be printed since the memory locations where obj1 and obj2 are stored are different. “obj1==obj2 is TRUE” would only be printed if the memory locations of obj1 and obj2 were the same as in the case:

String obj1 = new String("xyz");

String obj2 = obj1;

It is also possible for programmers to insert the “;” statement terminator prematurely. However, inadvertently doing this can drastically alter the meaning of code, even though the code is valid, as in the following example:

int a,b;

/\* … \*/

if (a == b); // the semi-colon will make this a null statement

{

/\* … \*/

}

Because of the misplaced semi-colon, the code block following the if will always be executed. In this case, it is extremely likely that the programmer did not intend to put the semi-colon there and thus will end up with unexpected results.

Java also uses the “>>>” for the unsigned shift operator. This can be easily confused with the “>>” (signed right shift) which will produce identical results for positive values, but very different values for negative values.

Each of the following would be clearer and have less potential for problems if the embedded assignments were conducted outside of the expressions:

int a,b,c,d;

/\* … \*/

if ((a == b) || (c = (d-1))){. . .} // the assignment to c will not

// occur if a is equal to b

or:

int a,b,c;

/\* … \*/

foo (a=b, c);

Each is a valid Java statement, but each may have unintended results. They are better formulated as :

int a,b,c,d;

/\* … \*/

c = d-1;

if ((a == b) || c) {. . .}

or

int a,b,c;

/\* … \*/

a = b;

foo (a, c);

### 6.25.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.25.5
* Explain statements with interspersed comments to clarify programming functionality and help future maintainers understand the intent and nuances of the code.
* Avoid assignments embedded within expressions.
* Give null statements a source line of their own. This, combined with enforcement by static analysis, would make clearer the intention that a statement was meant to be a null statement.

## 6.26 Dead and deactivated code [XYQ]

### 6.26.1 Applicability to language

Java allows the usual sources of dead code described in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.26 that are common to most conventional programming languages. To avoid dead code, there must be an execution path from the beginning of the constructor, method, instance initializer, or static initializer that contains the statement to the statement itself. If not, the result will in many cases be a compiler error or warning.

Java will not produce a compiler error or warning in what seems to be obvious cases of dead or deactivated code such as in the following example:

{

int num = 10;

while (num > 15) {

val = 5;

}

}

Even though the statement “val = 5;” can never be reached, this code will not result in a compiler warning or error. while statements, do statements and for statements are afforded special treatment. Except in the case where the while, do or for expressions have the constant value of true, the values of the expressions are not taken into account in determining reachability.

Java permits the use of line-oriented comments // or block oriented comments /\* . . . \*/ which can be used to remove code from compilation by the compiler. Block oriented comments make it difficult for reviewers to distinguish active code from deactivated code.

### 6.26.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.26.5.
* Use “//” comment syntax instead of “/\*…\*/” comment syntax to avoid the inadvertent commenting out of sections of code.
* Use an IDE that adds additional capabilities to detect dead or unreachable code.

## 6.27 Switch statements and static analysis [CLL]

### 6.27.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerabilities documented in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.27 apply to Java.

Java contains both a switch statement and a switch expression. A switch statement is of the form

switch (weekday) { // Weekday of type weekdays – monday, tuesday, etc.

case Monday: weekdayString = “Monday”;

break; // Required to prevent fall-through to a wrong case

// Tuesday – Friday the same

case Saturday: No break, so Sat and Sun have same execution

case Sunday: weedayString = “Weekend!!!”

}

A switch expression is of the form:

switch (weekday) { // weekday of type weekdays – Monday, Tuesday, etc.

case Monday -> weekdayString = “Monday”;

// After the statements of this case complete,

// control transfers to the end of the switch block.

case: Saturday, Sunday -> // multiple cases can be processed the same

}

Each will be discussed separately.

Because of the way in which the switch statement in Java is structured, it can be relatively easy to unintentionally omit the break statement between cases causing unintended execution of statements for some cases. Within a Java switch block, all statements after the matching case label are executed in sequence until a break statement or the end of the switch construct is reached.

Java contains a switch statement of the form:

public class SwitchWeekday {

public static void main(String[] args) {

enum Days { SUNDAY, MONDAY, TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY,

THURSDAY, FRIDAY, SATURDAY};

String weekdayString;

switch (weekday) {

case SUNDAY : weekdayString = "Sunday";

break;

case MONDAY: weekdayString = "Monday";

break;

case TUESDAY : weekdayString = "Tuesday";

break;

case WEDNESDAY : weekdayString = "Wednesday";

break;

case 5: weekdayString = "Thursday";

break;

case 6: weekdayString = "Friday";

break;

case 7: weekdayString = "Saturday";

break;

default: weekdayString = "Invalid weekday";

break;

}

System.out.println(weekdayString);

}

}

If there is not a default case and the switched expression does not match any of the cases, then control simply shifts to the next statement after the switch statement block.

Unintentionally omitting a break statement between two cases will cause subsequent cases to be executed until a break or the end of the switch block is reached.

int i;

/\* … \*/

switch (i) {

case 1: // fall through from case 1 to 2 is permitted

case 2: // since there is no intervening code

i++;

break;

case 3:

j++;

case 4: // fall through from case 3 to 4 is bad practice

// as it is not a direct fall through due to the

// j++ statement

}

An incomplete set of cases will cause the switch statement to either execute the default case or if there is not a default case, simply continue executing after the switch statement.

Any of these scenarios could cause unexpected results.

The switch expression can be used as a direct replacement for the switch statement. Switch expressions do not permit a fall-through from one case to another but permit multiple case expressions to select an alternative, for example”:

Given

enum Days { MONDAY, TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY, FRIDAY, SATURDAY, SUNDAY};

Boolean isWeekday;

switch (day) {

case MONDAY, TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY,

THURSDAY, FRIDAY -> isWeekday = True;

case SATURDAY, SUNDAY -> isWeekday = False;

}

Or alternatively, to use the power of the expression,

    public static Boolean isWeekDay (Days day)

    {

        Boolean result = switch(day) {

           case MONDAY, TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY,

THURSDAY, FRIDAY -> return true;

            case SATURDAY, SUNDAY -> return false;

        };

The switch statement and switch expression statically check coverage if the type is an enumeration type and will fail compilation if coverage is not complete or if there is no default case.

### 6.27.2 Guidance to language users

* Apply the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.27.5.
* Use switch expressions instead of switch statements and convert any switch statement to the corresponding switch expression.
* Prefer enum types with switch expressions to make choices between a static set of finite choices
* For switch statements, adopt a coding style that requires every nonempty case statement to be terminated with a break statement. Alternatively, if a direct fall through from one nonempty case to another is required that would violate the coding style, then this should be clearly documented by a comment, preferably one recognized by the analysis tool used.
* Adopt a coding style that permits the selected language processor and analysis tools to verify that all cases are covered. Where this is not possible, use a default clause that diagnoses the error.

Adopt a coding style that requires the default clause to be the last clause in the switch expression or the switch statement to assist the maintenance of complex switch statements.

## 6.28 Demarcation of control flow [EOJ]

### 6.28.1 Applicability to language

Java lacks a keyword for an explicit terminator. Therefore, it may not be readily apparent which statements are part of a loop construct or an if statement.

Consider the following section of code:

void foo(int a, int[] b) {

int i=0, count=0;

//

a = 0;

for (i=0; i<10; i++)

a += b[i]; //Did the programmer intend to include

// the next statement in the branch?

// If so, the programmer failed.

count++;

System.out.printf(“a=%d count=%d\n”, a, count);

}

The programmer may have intended both “a += b[i];” and “count++;” to be the body of the loop, but as there are no enclosing brackets, the statement “count++;” is only performed once. Similarly for if statements, the inclusion of statements on branches is susceptible to this error, for example:

int a,b,i;

//

if (i == 10){

a = 5; // This is correct

b = 10;

}

else

a = 10;

b = 5; // Incorrect since b = 5 will execute after either branch

If the assignments to b were added later and were expected to be part of each if and else clause (they are indented as such), the above code is incorrect: the assignment to b that was intended to be in the else clause is unconditionally executed.

If statements in Java are susceptible to another control flow problem since there is not a requirement for there to be an else statement for every if statement. An else statement in Java always belongs to the most recent if statement without an else. However, the situation could occur where it is not readily apparent to which if statement an else belongs due to the way the code is indented or aligned. For example:

int n1, n2, n3, rating;

rating = 0;

if (n1 >= n2)

if (n1 >= n3)

rating = n1;

else // visually appears to be connected to first ‘if’

// but actually belongs to the innermost ‘if’

rating = n3;

Based on the indentation, it would appear that the else belongs to the first if. However, since the else belongs to the most recent if without an else statement, the else would instead belong to the second if statement. The intended effect can be achieved through the use of braces, as follows:

int n1, n2, n3, rating;

rating = 0;

if (n1 >= n2) {

if (n1 >= n3) {

rating = n1;

}

}

else { // this else belongs to the outermost ‘if’

rating = n3;

}

### 6.28.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance provided in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.28.5.
* Enclose the bodies of if, else, while, for, and similar constructs in braces to disambiguate the control flow.

## 6.29 Loop control variables [TEX]

### 6.29.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerabilities documented in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.29 apply to Java. Java allows the modification of loop control variables within the loop, which can cause unexpected behaviour and can make the program more difficult to understand.

Since the modification of a loop control variable within a loop is infrequently encountered and unexpected, reviewers of Java code may not expect it and hence miss noticing the modification or not recognize its significance. Modifying the loop control variable can cause unexpected results. Loops can become infinite if the loop control variable is assigned a value such that the loop control test is never satisfied. Loops may unintentionally execute less iterations than expected, such as:

int a,i;

for (i=1; i<10; i++){

…

if (a > 7) {

i = 10;

}

…

}

which would cause the for loop to exit once a is greater than 7 regardless of the number of iterations that have occurred.

Java does not require the loop control variable to be an integer type. If, for example, it is a floating point type, the test for completion should not use equality or inequality, as floating point rounding may lead to mathematically inexact results, and hence an unterminated loop. The following may loop ten times or indefinitely:

for (float x = 0.0f; x != 10.0f; x += 1.0f){

. . .

}

The following is an improvement:

for (float x = 0.0f; x < 10.0f; x += 1.0f){

. . .

}

Rounding may cause this loop to be performed ten or eleven times. To ensure this loop is performed ten times, x could be initialized to 0.5f.

Enhanced for loops in Java provide for a simplified way of iterating through all elements of an array in order as in the following:

for (int myIndex : myArray) {

System.out.println (myIndex);

}

Unlike the conventional for statement, modifications to the loop variable do not affect the loop’s iteration order over the array. This can cause unexpected results. Thus, it is better to declare the loop control variable as final to prevent this possible confusion as the following illustrates:

for (final int myIndex : myArray) {

System.out.println (myIndex);

}

By declaring myIndex as final, the Java compiler will reject any assignments within the loop.

### 6.29.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance of ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.29.5.
* Do not modify a loop control variable within a loop.
* Declare all enhanced for statement loop variables final to cause the Java compiler to flag and reject any assignments made to the loop variable.
* Do not use floating point types as a loop control variable.
* Use enhanced for loops to eliminate the need for a loop control variable.

## 6.30 Off-by-one error [XZH]

### 6.30.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerability as documented in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.30 applies to Java.

Arrays are a common place for off-by-one errors to manifest. In Java, arrays are indexed starting at zero, causing the common mistake of looping from 0 to the size of the array as in:

public class arrayExample {

public static void main (String[] args) {

int intArray = new int[10];

int i;

for (i=0, i<=10, i++){

a[i] = 5;

. . .

}

return (0);

}

}

Java does provide protection in this case as any attempt to access an array with an index less than zero or greater than or equal to the length of the array will result in an ArrayIndexOutOfBoundsException to be thrown.

Programs in Java are susceptible to the usual off-by-one errors such as looping less than the desired amount. Such errors will usually only be detected by doing thorough testing of the program.

### 6.30.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.30.5.
* Use careful programming, testing of boundary conditions, and static analysis tools to detect off-by-one errors in Java.

## 6.31 Unstructured programming [EWD]

### 6.31.1 Applicability to language

Since Java is an object-oriented language, the structure is inherent in the language to lead to well-structured programs. The Java language does not contain the goto statement. However, even though Java sets forth this structure and in spite of it, programmers can create unstructured code. Java does have the continue, break, throw, and return statements that can create complicated control flows when used in an undisciplined manner. Unstructured code can be more difficult for Java static analyzers to analyze and is sometimes used on purpose to obfuscate the functionality of software. Code that has been modified multiple times by an assortment of programmers to add or remove functionality or to fix problems can be prone to become unstructured.

Many style guides recommend the use of no more than one return statement in a method. At times, this guidance can have the opposite effect, such as in the case of an if check of parameters at the start of a method that requires the remainder of the method to be encased in the if statement in order to reach the single exit point. If, for example, the use of multiple exit points can arguably make a piece of code clearer, then they should be used. However, the code should be able to withstand a critique that a restructuring of the code would have made the need for multiple exit points unnecessary.

### 6.31.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.31.5.
* Write clear and concise structured code to make code as understandable as possible.
* Restrict the use of continue and break in loops to encourage more structured programming.

## 6.32 Passing parameters and return values [CSJ]

### 6.32.1 Applicability to language

All Java data types are permitted as the type of a method parameter. Method arguments should be validated to ensure that their value falls within the bounds of the method’s anticipated values. Java passes any parameter that is of one of the eight primitive types by value. The parameter is evaluated and its value is assigned to the formal parameter of the method or constructor that is being called. Parameters provide information to the method from outside the scope of the method.

public static int minFunction (int n1, int n2) {

int min;

if (n1 > n2){

min = n2;

}

else {

min = n1;

}

return min;

}

When the value of an object is passed as a parameter, effectively the reference to the object is passed. This allows the object to be changed in the method.

public class testObject {

private int value;

public static void main(String[] args) {

testObject p = new testObject();

p.value = 10;

System.out.println("Before calling: " + p.value);

increment(p);

System.out.println("After calling: " + p.value);

}

public static void increment(testObject a){

a.value++;

}

}

However, when multiple parameters are passed, a vulnerability called “aliasing” may occur. For example

public static void main(testObject a, testObject b) {

a.value = 7;

b.value = 21;

System.out.println(a.value + b.value); // Normally prints 28

// Sometimes prints 42

}

Surprisingly, the value of 42 is printed in cases when main is called with variables denoting the same object, i.e. main(x,y) when x == y. Similar problems arise when the current instance is passed as a parameter to one of its methods.

Java also allows expressions such as the post increment expression “i++” to be passed as parameters. This can cause confusion and it is safer to perform the increment in a separate, prior statement to the call. The order of evaluation of parameters proceeds from left to right and care should be taken when side effects modify the same variables such as “testMethod (i++, ++i)”.

### 6.32.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.32.5.
* Use care when using expressions with side effects as parameters to methods.
* Write code to account for potential aliasing among parameters, including the current instance this.
* Avoid the use of expressions with side effects for multiple parameters to functions, since the order in which the parameters are evaluated and hence the side effects occur is unspecified.

## 6.33 Dangling references to stack frames [DCM]

### 6.33.1 Applicability to language

This vulnerability does not apply to Java, because in Java any reference that does not point to a valid object will be garbage collected. References are also passed by value, meaning that Java creates a copy of the reference and passes the copy to the method.

## 6.34 Subprogram signature mismatch [OTR]

### 6.34.1 Applicability to language

Except for vulnerabilities associated with a variable number of arguments, i.e. varargs, the vulnerability as documented in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.34 does not apply to Java since the compiler diagnoses mismatches.

If there are multiple member methods that are potentially applicable to a method invocation, overload resolution in the compiler determines the actual method to be called or, if multiple candidates still remain, a compiler error results.

There are two concerns identified with this vulnerability. The first is if a subprogram is called with a different number of parameters than it expects. The second is if parameters of different types are passed than are expected.

Java supports variadic functions/methods, termed varargs, as shown in the following example:

public class classSample {

void demoMethod(String... args) {

for (String arg: args) {

System.out.println(arg);

}

}

public static void main(String args[] ){

new classSample().demoMethod("water", "fire", "earth");

new classSample().demoMethod("wood", "metal");

}

}

A varargs argument must be the last argument in a multiple argument list and multiple varargs, even if of different primitive types, are not allowed. Though varargs can be very useful, the use of varargs can cause performance issues and possibly memory consumption issues leading to unexpected results. Varargs could also lead to heap pollution, which occurs when a variable of a parameterized type refers to an object that is not of that parameterized type.

### 6.34.2 Guidance to language users

Do not use the variable argument feature except in rare instances. Instead, use arrays to pass parameters.

## 6.35 Recursion [GDL]

### 6.35.1 Applicability to language

Java permits recursion, hence is subject to the problems described in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.35.

### 6.35.2 Guidance to language users

* Apply the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.35.5.
* If recursion is used, then catch the java.lang.OutOfMemoryError exception to handle insufficient storage due to recursive execution.

## 6.36 Ignored error status and unhandled exceptions [OYB]

### 6.36.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerabilities described in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.36 exists in Java. Java mitigates the vulnerability by enforcing the handling of *checked* exceptions.

Java offers a set of predefined exceptions for error conditions that may be detected by checks that are compiled into a program. In addition, the programmer may define exceptions that are appropriate for their application. These exceptions are handled using an exception handler. Exceptions may be handled in the environment where the exception occurs or may be propagated out to an enclosing scope.

Java has two types of exceptions, checked and unchecked. A checked exception requires a response and the existence of a response is checked for at compile time. A method must either handle the exception or it must specify the exception using the throws keyword. This reduces the number of exceptions that are not properly handled. Unchecked exceptions are subclasses of RunTimeException and do not require handling since recovery is likely difficult or impossible, or the addition of an exception would not add significantly to the program’s correctness and could be viewed as simply cluttering up the program needlessly.

Lack of handling of checked exceptions, such as FileNotFoundException, is detected at compile time. There must be a try and catch block to handle the exception as in the following example:

public static void main(String[] args)

{

try

{

FileReader file = new FileReader("datafile.txt");

}

catch (FileNotFoundException e)

{

// print the stack trace for this

// throwable object on the standard error output stream

e.printStackTrace();

}

}

Thus, the vulnerability of unhandled exceptions as documented in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.36 does not apply for checked exceptions. The vulnerability does exist for unchecked exceptions.

Checked exceptions should not simply be suppressed by catching the exceptions with an empty or trivial catch block. The catch block must either recover from the exceptional condition, rethrow the exception by propagating it to an enclosing scope or throw an exception that is appropriate to the context of the catch block.

Unchecked exceptions, such as ArithmeticException, can be ignored in the program and the program will still compile. However, should an exception occur, how the exception should be handled might not be specified. Unchecked errors are mainly due to programming errors that should be fixed to prevent the unchecked exception from occurring again.

Variables defined in a try block are only local, so if they are needed in the catch block, define and initialize the variables outside of the try block.

## 6.36.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.36.5.
* Use *try-with-resources* which extends the behaviour of the try/catch construct to allow access to resources without having to close them afterwards as the resource closures are done automatically.
* Use unchecked exceptions just in case an unanticipated exception occurs.
* Use *try-with-resources* for automatic resource management.

## 6.37 Type-breaking reinterpretation of data [AMV]

### 6.37.1 Applicability to language

Except for methods in sun.misc.Unsafe, Java is not subject to the vulnerabilities documented in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.37.

sun.misc.Unsafe provides some low level programming features such as reinterpretation of data, but, as its name implies, is considered unsafe for general use. Documentation is not widely available and its use is usually reliant on miscellaneous web postings that leads to even more unsafe use.

### 6.37.2 Guidance to language users

* Use sun.misc.Unsafe only when absolutely necessary to reinterpret data and carefully document its use.
* Consider segregating intended reinterpretation operations into distinct subprograms, as the presence of reinterpretation greatly complicates program understanding and static analysis.

## 6.38 Deep vs. shallow copying [YAN]

### 6.38.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerability described in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.38 applies to Java.

The usual way of performing a copy of an object in Java is through the use of the clone() method. Using the default implementation of the clone method will result in a shallow copy with all of the resulting issues associated with a shallow copy. Unexpected results can occur if the elements of values are changed via some other reference. Using a deep copy that makes the original and cloned object totally disjoint comes at the cost of efficiency and performance. To create a deep copy of an object, the clone method has to be overridden. Since a deep copy is the exact duplicate of the original object, extensive use of deep copies can cause considerable dynamic memory use.

Another way of copying objects is to serialize them through the Serializable interface. An object can be serialized and then be deserialized to a new object. Since the constructor is not used for objects copied with clone or serialization which can lead to improperly initialized day and prevents the use of the final member fields.

The constructor is not used for objects copied with clone or serialization. This can lead to improperly initialized data and prevents making member fields final.

### 6.38.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.38.5.
* Ensure that deep-copied objects are initialized properly.
* Be careful of excessive memory use when using deep copying.

## 6.39 Memory leaks and heap fragmentation [XYL]

### 6.39.1 Applicability to language

Java has automatic memory management along with a built-in Garbage Collector (GC). Nevertheless, memory leaks can still occur in Java applications. Although objects are no longer being used by an application, the Garbage Collector cannot remove them from working memory if the objects are still being referenced. Left unchecked, this will likely result in the application consuming more and more resources until a fatal OutOfMemoryError occurs.

Many scenarios may lead to a memory leak:

* Referencing a memory intensive object with a static field ties its lifecycle to the lifecycle of the JVM itself.
* Unclosed resources, such as database connections, input streams, and session objects.
* An instance of a non-static inner class (anonymous class) always requires an instance of the enclosing class and has, by default, an implicit reference to its containing instance. If this instance of the inner class object is used in an application, then even after the instance of the containing class goes out of scope, the instance of the containing class will not be garbage collected as long as the instance of the inner class exists.
* Overriding a class’ finalize() method and then the objects of that class are not instantly garbage collected since the garbage collector queues them for finalization, which occurs at a later point in time.
* Reading a large String object, and then calling intern() on that object will result in it being stored in the string pool, which is located in PermGen (permanent memory) where it will stay as long as the application runs.
* Using the ThreadLocal construct to isolate state to a particular thread and thus achieve thread safety, so that each thread will hold an implicit reference to its copy of a ThreadLocal variable and will maintain its own copy, instead of sharing the resource across multiple threads, as long as the thread is alive. This can introduce memory leaks if not used carefully.
* Calling applications written in programming languages that are prone to memory leaks.

### 6.39.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.39.5.
* Use a heap-analyzer tool to assist in detecting memory leaks.
* Enable verbose garbage collection to see a detailed trace of the garbage collector actions.
* Use Java profiler tools that monitor and diagnose memory leaks.
* Set references to null once they are no longer needed so that the garbage collector can collect the designated object.
* Use reference objects from the java.lang.ref package instead of directly referencing objects to allow them to be easily garbage collected.

## 6.40 Templates and generics [SYM]

### 6.40.1 Applicability to language

Generics allow programmers to specify, with a single method declaration, a set of related methods or, with a single class, a set of related types. At the heart of Java generics is type safety, which allows invalid types to be caught at compile time. The emphasis on type safety causes many problems to be averted.

Generics in Java are implemented with type erasure. That is, the generic type information is only available at compile time and not in the bytecode or at runtime. Thus, generics do not affect the signature of a method resulting in the same signature for methods that have the same name and the same arguments. This can result in signature collusion. In addition, this does not allow one to determine parameterized types using reflection.

Java allows the use of upper bounded, lower bounded and unbounded wildcards (“?”) in a generic. The use of a wildcard in generic programming can be useful but can also introduce uncertainty as to the intention during the maintenance cycle. Generic wildcards also add a level of complexity that may not be fully understood or comprehended by Java programmers who know the basics of generics, but not more sophisticated techniques like wildcards.

### 6.40.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.40.5.
* Use generic wildcards carefully and only when needed.
* Follow the acronym PECS for “Producer Extends, Consumer Super” – use extends when getting values out of a data structure, use super when putting values into a data structure, and use and explicit type when doing both. See 6.42 Violations of the Liskov substitution principle or the contract model.
* Use different names for methods to get different signatures.

## 6.41 Inheritance [RIP]

Java supports inheritance but does not support multiple inheritance or cyclic inheritance for classes which allows Java to avoid problems associated with multiple inheritance. Interfaces support multiple inheritance, but the vulnerabilities are centered on inheritance of the implementation, which is missing from interfaces.

Java does allow subclasses to override inherited methods, potentially causing difficulty in determining where in the hierarchy an invoked method is actually defined. An overriding method must specify the same name, parameter list, and return type as the method being overridden. The use of the keyword final in a method header will prevent the method from being overridden. For example, “final String getDate” will prevent getDate from being overridden in a subclass as the compiler will report an error if the method is overridden in a subclass.

The issues arising from inheritance are absent when composition is used, especially when using library classes.

Apart from this mitigation to accidental or malicious overriding, all other vulnerabilities described in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.41 for single inheritance apply.

### 6.41.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.41.5.
* Use composition as an alternative to inheritance
* Use interfaces when multiple inheritance is required.
* Keep the inheritance graph as shallow as possible to simplify the review of inheritance relationships and method overridings.

## 6.42 Violations of the Liskov substitution principle or the contract model [BLP]

### 6.42.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerabilities documented in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.42 apply to Java. Since Java supports inheritance, users should abide by the Liskov substitution principle. As such, Java developers should be wary of having to add a restriction on parameters to an overridden method. If that restriction does not exist in the base class, the Liskov Substitution Principle is violated.

Precondition and postcondition checks are not supported in Java, but assertions can be used to implement them.

### 6.42.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.42.5.
* Use assertions to implement precondition and postcondition checks.

## 6.43 Redispatching [PPH]

### 6.43.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerability as documented in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.43 exists in Java. Dynamic method dispatch is the mechanism by which a call to an overridden method is resolved at run time, rather than compile time. When an overridden method is called through a superclass reference, Java determines which version (superclass/subclasses) of that method is to be executed based upon the type of the object being referred to at the time the call occurs. Thus, this determination is made dynamically at run time. For methods that are overridden in subclasses in the object being initialized, the overriding methods are used and thus the redispatching problem of infinite recursion could manifest.

### 6.43.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.43.5.
* Prevent redispatching where it is not necessary, and document the behaviour.

## 6.44 Polymorphic variables [BKK]

### 6.44.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerabilities related to upcasts in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.44 exist in Java.

The vulnerabilities related to unsafe casts do not exist in Java since there are no unsafe casts.

Downcasts from a superclass to a subclass in the same type hierarchy is legal and will not be flagged by the compiler. In the following example:

* Subclass extends Superclass, and declares method().
* BadDowncast declares a main() method that instantiates Superclass. BadDowncast then downcasts this object to Subclass which raises the exception ClassCastException, because the instance currently designated by subclass is not an instance of Subclass.
* If, however, the value of Superclass were an instance of Subclass, the downcast will succeed and subclass.method() will be called.

class Superclass

{

}

class Subclass extends Superclass

{

void method()

{

}

}

public class BadDowncast

{

public static void main(String[] args)

{

Superclass superclass = new Superclass();

Subclass subclass = (Subclass) superclass; // raises an exception

subclass.method();

}

}

### 6.44.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.44.5.

## 6.45 Extra intrinsics [LRM]

The vulnerability as documented in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.44 does not exist in Java, since Java does not provide any intrinsics that can conflict with a user-defined name. All language-provided capabilities outside of the standard operators reside in named library classes and the usual name resolution rules apply.

## 6.46 Argument passing to library functions [TRJ]

### 6.46.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerability as documented in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.46 applies to Java.

Parameter validation should always be performed in public methods since the caller is out of scope of its implementation. In public methods or other instances where such validation is not performed or it is unsure whether it is performed, the calling routine should perform parameter validation.

There are open source libraries that provide for preconditions to be placed on parameters. For instance, the open source library Guava provides utilities such as checkArgument as illustrated in this example:

public static double sqrt (double value)

{

Preconditions.checkArgument(value >= 0.0, "negative value: %s", value);

// …perform calculation of the square root

}

## 6.46.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.46.5.
* Do not make assumptions about the values of parameters.
* Use preconditions to validate parameters
* Do not assume that the calling or receiving function will be range checking a parameter. Therefore, establish a strategy for each interface to check parameters in either the calling or receiving routines.

## 6.47 Inter-language calling [DJS]

### 6.47.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerabilities in ISO/IECTR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.47 exists in Java when working with components that had been developed in other languages. Interfacing with other languages can be difficult. Though Java attempts to make interfacing with other languages easier, it can still be rather complicated. Foreign Function Interfaces (FFI) are one way to provide a clean API for communicating between the languages. The Java Native Interface (JNI) is a typical FFI designed to make a foreign function interface easier and safer. JNI can be used to interface with C/C++, assembly and other languages. The pitfalls of using JNI or other FFI are generally that of impacted performance and, because of the many issues related to interfacing between languages, correctness potentially causing issues where the code may sometimes work, but not reliably because of the complexities of the interface. FFIs can introduce issues that are difficult to debug because of the complexities and lack of transparency within the interface.

### 6.47.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.47.5.
* Use a foreign function interface such as JNI to provide a clear separation between Java and the other language.
* Use foreign function interfaces carefully as they can be error prone and lack transparency making debugging harder.
* Be aware that native code can lack many of the protections afforded by Java such as bounds checks on structures not being performed on native methods and explicitly perform the necessary checks.
* Minimize the use of those issues known to be error-prone when interfacing between languages, such as:

1. passing character strings
2. dimension, bounds and layout issues of arrays
3. interfacing with other parameter mechanisms such as call by reference, value or name
4. handling faults, exceptions and errors, and
5. bit representation.

## 6.48 Dynamically-linked code and self-modifying code [NYY]

### 6.48.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerability documented in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.48 exists in Java as explained below.

The Java Virtual Machine (JVM) does not allow access to random locations in memory, so modifying an already loaded byte code for self-modifying code is not possible from a Java program. However, new classes and methods that have not been loaded can be written or modified as a Java program is executing and then loaded.

Class loaders are responsible for loading Java classes during runtime dynamically to the JVM. When the runtime environment needs to load a new class for an application, the class is located and loaded by one of three types of class loaders in the following order: bootstrap class loader; extension class loader; and system class loader. The bootstrap class loader is responsible for loading all core Java classes. The extension class loader is a child of the bootstrap class loader and loads classes from the extension directories. The system class loader is responsible for loading code from the path specified by the CLASSPATH environment variable or alternatively by the –classpath option. The –classpath option will take precedence over the CLASSPATH environment variable. Altering either of these could lead to executing code that is different from what was tested.

The Java platform allows for JAR files to be digitally signed, thus providing a mechanism for verification of the origin of the file.

Java classes are not loaded into memory all at once, but when required by an application. Thus, if a class is changed while a program is running and before it has been loaded into memory, the new version will be used. Java also allows for class reloading. Thus, a program that employs class reloading makes it possible for an attacker to modify a class while a program is running.

### 6.48.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.48.5.
* Do not dynamically modify classes, unless there is a documented rationale and the rationale is carefully reviewed.
* As appropriate, verify through the use of signatures that dynamically linked or shared code being used is the same as that which was tested.
* If possible, retest when dynamically linked or shared code has changed before using the application.

## 6.49 Library signature [NSQ]

### 6.49.1 Applicability to language

Integrating Java and another language into a single executable relies on knowledge of how to interface the method/function calls, argument lists and data structures so that symbols match in the object code during linking.

Arrays and other data structures may be interpreted by another language differently than the way that Java interprets or stores them in memory. This may cause issues with transferring data between Java and the receiving language. For instance, it is common to use one-dimensional arrays to pass array data to and from programs in another language since the way that Java stores multidimensional arrays is significantly different than that of C, C++ and other languages.

Issues can arise when Java interfaces with a language that does not support garbage collection. Java may perform garbage collection and delete objects before the other non-garbage collection language being called is finished with them. Issues can also arise with the integration of non-Java exception handling or other error handling mechanisms, e.g. exit codes.

To alleviate some of these issues, wrappers can be used. Though wrappers can make the interfacing easier, wrappers can be error-prone and impact performance through the overhead of the wrapper.

### 6.49.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.49.5.
* Use a tool, if possible, to automatically create interface wrappers.
* Be wary of making assumptions about argument lists, data structures and error handling mechanisms, as other languages are likely to have differences in these areas.

## 6.50 Unanticipated exceptions from library routines [HJW]

### 6.50.1 Applicability to language

If the library routine is a Java routine, the vulnerabilities described in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.50 do not apply to Java with the minor exception of unhandled unchecked exceptions, since all checked exceptions are part of the specification of the library routines and handling them is enforced by the compiler and runtime system.

For foreign libraries, see 6.49 Library signature.

Though a response to a checked exception is required, it is unfortunately too common for a programmer to assume that a checked exception could not possibly happen and instead of putting appropriate code in to handle the unexpected event, the programmer does just enough to get a clean compile by inserting an empty catch block as in the following example:

public void whatCouldPossiblyGoWrong() {

try {

// do something

} catch (NumberFormatException e) {

// this will never happen

}

}

### 6.50.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the mitigation mechanisms of subclause 6.50.5 of ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019.
* Always have an appropriate response for checked exceptions since even things that should never happen do happen occasionally.

## 6.51 Pre-processor directives [NMP]

This vulnerability does not apply to Java, as Java does not have a preprocessor.

## 6.52 Suppression of language-defined run-time checking [MXB]

This vulnerability does not apply to Java since runtime checks cannot be suppressed.

## 6.53 Provision of inherently unsafe operations [SKL]

### 6.53.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerabilities documented in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.53 apply to Java.

The Java compiler generates the “uses unsafe or unchecked operations” warning for code considered to be unsafe. However, it is just a warning and can be ignored.

Although Java is inherently a safe language, it does allow some operations that are inherently unsafe. For example, one undocumented class, sun.misc.Unsafe, contains code that is recognized to be inherently unsafe, but is often required for low-level programming. For instance, it allows the creation of an instance of a class without invoking its constructor code, initialization code and various other JVM security checks. The allocateMemory() method in sun.misc.Unsafe also allows the creation of huge objects, larger than Integer.MAX\_VALUE, that are invisible to the garbage collector and the JVM.

### 6.53.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.53.5.
* Analyze the Java warnings “uses unsafe or unchecked operations” to determine whether action is needed or whether it is appropriate to leave the code as is.
* Only use the class sun.misc.Unsafe in specialized instances where the capabilities it provides are essential. It should not be used for everyday use to evade Java protections.
* Document all uses of unsafe code with in-place comments and provide evidence that all such uses function correctly and safely.
* Name unsafe extensions with names that retain the unsafe nomenclature.

## 6.54 Obscure language features [BRS]

### 6.54.1 Applicability of language

Java is a compact language such that most, if not all, of the statements are commonly used. There are ways that a feature of the language can be easily misused and as such, restrictions on the feature are commonly expressed in coding standards in software development organizations. For instance, the inclusion of statements other than loop control statements should not be included in a for() statement. For instance:

for (i = 0, total=0; i < 50; i++){

total += value[i];

}

Though the above code is legal, the inclusion of the non-loop control statement, total=0, reduces the maintainability and readability of the code.

Other features are unique to Java and programmers schooled in other languages may not use these features since they are not as familiar with them as they would be with a feature that was common to both their native language(s) and Java. Finally, some features such as the logical right shift (“>>>”) operator is only applicable under rare circumstances and there are alternative ways of achieving the same result and thus programmers may forget that the feature exists.

Problems can also arise from the use of a combination of features that are rarely used together or fraught with issues if not used correctly. This can cause unexpected results and potential vulnerabilities.

### 6.54.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.54.5.
* Specify coding standards that restricts or bans the use of features or combinations of features that have been observed to lead to vulnerabilities in the operational environment for which the software is intended.

## 6.55 Unspecified behaviour [BQF]

### 6.55.1 Applicability of language

The Java specification is fairly complete and leaves very little unspecified. Two areas that lack full specification are:

* The garbage-collection algorithm used and any internal optimization that is performed. Since when garbage collection happens can be unpredictable, timing issues can be introduced. Garbage collection behaviour can be influenced by changing the heap size since the default garbage collector is scheduled to execute when free space on the heap goes below implementation-defined limits.
* Optimization of Java virtual machine instructions may cause portions of instructions to be skipped or reordered. Among others, this can influence timing behaviours or heap usage.

### 6.55.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.55.5.
* Do not rely on unspecified behaviour because the behaviour can change at each instance. Any code that makes assumptions about the behaviour of something that is unspecified should be replaced.
* Reduce the number of temporary objects to minimize the impact and need for garbage collection.
* Increase the Java heap size to reduce the frequency and amount of time spent doing garbage collection.
* Enable verbose garbage collection and profiling to locate and fix memory leaks to reduce need for garbage collection.

## 6.56 Undefined behaviour [EWF]

### 6.56.1 Applicability of language

Java is a well-defined language, but has some areas of undefined behaviour. Areas of undefined behaviour are:

* The exact timing and scheduling of multiple threads. This is the primary area where undefined behaviour is experienced in Java.
* Calling a non-final method of the same class in the constructor. The undefined behaviour occurs if this method is overridden in a subclass. Notice that construction occurs from the superclass to the subclass. In some virtual machines, the local attributes will be constructed, the superclass constructor will finish its execution then, when the constructor of subclass is reached the attributes will be constructed again, overriding previously defined values.
* Interpreting a byte array as characters using the default encoding, instead of the encoding used to produce the byte array and lacking a valid character representation for some of the bytes in the default encoding.
* How soon a finalizer will be invoked, which thread will invoke the finalizer for any given object, and the ordering of finalize method calls are all unspecified.
* Details of how and when garbage collection will occur, even when the garbage collection is explicitly invoked.
* If circularly declared classes are detected at runtime then a ClassCircularityError is thrown. Otherwise the behaviour is undefined and could lead to a StackOverflowError being thrown.

### 6.56.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.56.5.

## 6.57 Implementation–defined behaviour [FAB]

### 6.57.1 Applicability to language

Java has very little implementation-defined behaviour as Java is a Write Once Run Anywhere (WORA) language. The Java operating model is that the Java source code is compiled and converted into byte code. The byte code is designed to be platform independent.

The main areas of implementation-defined behaviour relate to the connection between the JVM and the underlying operation systems, such as Windows, Unix, etc. File name conventions, use of file path separators, thread behaviours, and network access mechanisms may have different observable behaviours.

For the instance of file path separators, an example of an area that is implementation defined are the two static variables in the java.io.File class, which will be used to make file path separation Java code platform independent. File.separator is the String value that an operating system uses to separate file paths. For instance, on Unix based systems, the a “/” is used, whereas on a Windows based system, a “\” is used. In order to make code platform independent, when creating a file path, use:

String filePath = "temp" + File.separator + "abcd.txt"

instead of the platform dependent

String filePath = "temp/abcd.txt".

### 6.57.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.57.5.

## 6.58 Deprecated language features [MEM]

### 6.58.1 Applicability to language

As with other languages, it is recommended that deprecated classes, methods, and fields not be used. Java does provide a way to express deprecation because as a class evolves, its API inevitably changes. Methods are renamed for consistency, improved methods are added, and fields change. To facilitate the transition to the new APIs, Java supports two mechanisms for deprecation of a class, method, or field: an annotation and the Javadoc tag that is the old method. Java annotations were introduced in Java 5 and are the preferred method. For either mechanism, existing calls to the old API continue to work, but the annotation causes the compiler to issue a warning when it finds references to deprecated program elements. Comments are inserted in the code prior to the @Deprecated annotation to warn users against using the deprecated item and provide information on what should be used instead. However, in some instances where there is not a suitable replacement, users should simply not use the method.

public class ADeprecatedExmp {

/\*\*

\* @Deprecated

\* reason(s) why it was deprecated

\*/

@Deprecated

public void showDeprecatedMessage(){

System.out.println("This method is marked as deprecated");

}

public static void main(String a[]){

ADeprecatedExmp mde = new ADeprecatedExmp();

mde.showDeprecatedMessage();

}

}

### 6.58.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.58.5.
* Use the Java annotation and a Javadoc tag to indicate deprecation of classes, methods, or member fields
* Rewrite code that uses deprecated language features to remove such use, whenever possible.

## 6.59 Concurrency – Activation [CGA]

### 6.59.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerability as specified in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.59 applies to Java.

Java will throw an exception if a thread is not able to be created. The “java.lang.OutOfMemoryError: Failed to create a thread” message occurs when the system does not have enough resources to create a new thread. There are three possible causes for this message: inadequate user/application resources, lack of native (or system) memory or there are too many threads already running.

A try/catch can be used to ensure that if an OutOfMemoryError is encountered, then processes can be gracefully shutdown and resources cleanly released. It is generally not recommended that any other recovery be attempted.

A thread that has visibility to another thread object can test t.isAlive() to determine if the thread is executing.

The use of the Java Executor Framework (java.util.concurrent.Executor) provides a framework for efficiently managing multiple threads. For instance, it allows for the easy creation of a thread pool containing multiple threads, such as the creation of five threads:

ExecutorService executor = Executors.newFixedThreadPool(5);

Managing threads through a framework such as this can avert potential problems with thread activation and management.

### 6.59.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.59.5.
* Check the maximum number of allowed processes per user limit and raise the limit if appropriate. For example, on Linux systems, check the limit using the “ulimit –u” command.
* Increase the amount of native memory available by lowering the size of the Java heap by using the –Xmx option.
* Lower the number of threads if possible.
* Check the amount of free disk space. For example, on Linux systems, check the amount of free disk space by using the “df” command.
* Consider using the ThreadGroup class for creation and management of threads that groups related threads into a single unit so that operations can be performed on all of the threads at once.
* Use a thread management framework such as the Java Executor Framework (java.util.concurrent.Executor) to provide for more efficient activation and management of threads.

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## 6.60 Concurrency – Directed termination [CGT]

### 6.60.1 Applicability to language

The vulnerability as described in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.60 applies to Java.

Killing a thread in Java used to be done by calling the java.lang.Thread.stop() method. java.lang.Thread.stop() has been deprecated as it is inherently unsafe leading to an inconsistent state of operation such as monitored objects being corrupted. One recommended way to stop a thread is by using a synchronized condition. The thread periodically checks the synchronized condition and uses the value to determine whether it should gracefully terminate.

Another way of directing the termination of a thread is through the use of the java.lang.Thread.interrupt() method. Both the initiating thread which generates the interrupt and the receiving thread which should handle the interrupt must cooperate in this process. The receiving thread must occasionally check to see if the interrupt has been generated for if it does not, then the interrupt will be effectively ignored. In a scenario where a thread may be in a sleep state or waiting for a lock for a long period of time, the use of a synchronized condition may not be effective. Instead, the use of java.lang.Thread.interrupt() can be used to interrupt a thread in a sleeping or waiting state and then the thread can take action to terminate itself gracefully.

Java allows a synchronization mechanism for communicating between threads, which is implemented using monitors. Each object in Java is associated with a monitor. A thread can lock or unlock the monitor to control access to the object. An unlock action is automatically performed once the synchronization statement or method has completed, either normally or abruptly.

Either method of terminating a thread in Java is dependent on the programmer to decide exactly how to respond to the sent interrupt or to a condition variable being set to indicate termination.

### 6.60.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.58.5.
* Use a synchronized condition to indicate that a thread should exit.
* Avoid using the Thread.interrupt() method to interrupt a thread to indicate that the thread should exit, unless it can be guaranteed that the interrupted thread is not modifying shared state which could be corrupted.

## 6.61 Concurrent data access [CGX]

### 6.61.1 Applicability to language

Some data elements of Java can be shared between threads, while other data elements cannot. Data elements that can be shared between threads are termed shared memory or heap memory. All instance fields, static fields, and array elements are stored in heap memory and thus can be shared. Other data elements such as local variables, formal method parameters, and exception handler parameters are never shared between threads. The obvious issue is that data elements shared between threads must be synchronized to be accessed safely.

Concurrent access to an object must be synchronized to prevent data races and unforeseen results. To avoid unsynchronized access among threads, Java provides the synchronized keyword. Java provides synchronized methods to ensure non-interleaved access to an object of a class. implicitly

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Furthermore, Java provides private components to disallow direct access to components by users of the class. When these capabilities are combined, the functionality of simple monitors can be achieved provided that all modifying accesses to private data components are performed via synchronized methods (as opposed to access by direct access, e.g. x.data. For conditional waiting to be achieved, Java provides the wait() and notify()/notifyAll() primitives.

In addition, single statements can be synchronized on an object, such as synchronized(x); x.notify(); Calls on x.notify(), x.notifyAll() and x.wait() outside of synchronization on object x yield an exception.

Data elements that are shared may have their new values cached delaying the writing of their value to main memory. Other threads reading the current main memory will get the old value until the cache value is written to main memory. Java provides the primitive volatile to ensure that all changes to a variable are atomic and the result is visible to all other threads that may also be accessing the variable. Alternatively, cache-coherence protocols on multiprocessor architectures may serve the same purpose. For example, sixty-four bit operations can be problematic since the operation could be performed as two separate 32 bit operations to a non-volatile long or double in many computers. Because other threads may read the value after the first write of 32 bits and before the second write, the value could be incorrect. By declaring the long or double variable as volatile, the writes and reads of the long or double variables are always atomic.

Since concurrent execution of threads is more common now with multicore processors, the order of execution can be very important. Examination of the source code will be misleading since compilers or firmware/hardware may reorder statements to optimize performance within each thread, but which could affect the resulting execution order leading to different results than expected. In addition, the sequencing of events between threads is unpredictable unless synchronization takes place between the threads in question. (*include the statemt in the Java RM clause 17 and look upjava.util.concurrency).*

### 6.61.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.61.5.
* Form ‘happens-before’ relationships through the use of the java.util.concurrent package.
* Use the volatile keyword to force a data element to always go to main memory for its reads and writes
* Mark as private all data components that are accessed by multiple threads.
* Apply the synchronized keyword to methods that access the same data components of an object to prevent multiple invocations of methods on the same object from interleaving.
* Access all data components, including private components only through synchronized getter and setter methods.

## 6.62 Concurrency – Premature termination [CGS]

### 6.62.1 Applicability to language

Java is susceptible to premature termination of threads as documented in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.62.

Java provides the java.lang.Thread.isAlive() method to test if a thread is alive. The method will return true if the thread is alive and false otherwise. This allows the thread to be monitored to see if it is still functioning.

Java has a thread group feature. A thread group forms a tree of threads and other thread groups in which every thread group except the initial thread group has a parent. A Java thread group is implemented by the java.lang.ThreadGroup class. However, many of the methods of the ThreadGroup class such as resume(), stop(), and suspend()) have been deprecated. Other methods in the class are not thread safe such as activeCount() and enumerate(). Alternatively, the Java ExecutorService is a framework provided by the JDK that simplifies the execution of tasks in asynchronous mode.

Threads that exit unexpectedly are vulnerable to the issues raised in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.62.3. java.lang. Premature termination as a result of an unexpected exceptions can be handled by either a per-thread or system wide uncaught exception handler. The exception handler can be assigned for all exceptions in a thread group using the static Thread.setDefaultUncaughtExceptionHandler() method. The result is a notification to the Java VM either for the thread group, or to the Java VM for printing to the error log, but in either case, no notification of other threads occur. The thread that is terminating can have the relevant exception handler installed and can use normal thread notifications…

### 6.62.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.62.5.
* Use the java.lang.Thread.isAlive() method to check as needed to see if a thread is still active.
* Use the Java ExecutorService framework for thread group management.
* Use the Thread.setDefaultUncaughtExceptionHandler() method in thread groups to handle unexpected exceptions.

## 6.63 Lock protocol errors [CGM]

### 6.63.1 Applicability to language

Each object in Java is associated with a monitor, which a thread locks by accessing a synchronized method and unlocks upon leaving the outermost synchronized method. Every object has an intrinsic lock associated with it. A thread that needs exclusive and consistent access to an object's fields acquires the object's intrinsic lock by accessing a synchronized method and accessing them, and then release the intrinsic lock when it is done with them.

The Java.lang.Thread class has six potential states for a thread: NEW, RUNNABLE, BLOCKED, WAITING, TIMED\_WAITING, and TERMINATED. Three of these are states that indicate that the thread is waiting are BLOCKED, WAITING and TIMED\_WAITING.

BLOCKED indicates that the thread is waiting for a monitor lock. For instance, the BlockingQueue interface, java.util.concurrent.BlockingQueue, is a thread safe queue that permits multiple threads to insert or extract elements without concurrency issues. If the queue is empty, a thread will be blocked from taking an element until one is added to the queue. Similarly, if the queue is full, a thread will be blocked from adding additional elements.

WAITING indicates that the thread is waiting on another thread to perform a particular action. Future objects can be used to indicate when a thread has an object ready for the main thread to use. This allows the main thread to keep track of the progress and result from another thread.

TIMED\_WAITING indicates that the thread is waiting for another thread to perform an action for up to a specified waiting time.

Each of these states provide an indication of ways that a thread can be waiting on another thread’s actions so as to attempt to alleviate lock protocol errors. Though Java has intrinsic language features for managing lock protocol errors, per the Java specification, “The Java programming language neither prevents nor requires detection of deadlock conditions.” It is recommended in the Java specification that conventional techniques for deadlock avoidance be used since Java does not inherently have preventions.

### 6.63.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.63.5.
* Use the intrinsic monitor features coupled with conventional techniques to avoid lock protocol errors.
* Use java.util.concurrent.BlockingQueue when sharing queues among threads.
* Use java.util.concurrent.FutureTask when performing asynchronous processing of data.
* Use java.lang.Object.wait to cause the current thread to wait until another thread invokes the notify() or notifyAll() method or a specified amount of time has elapsed.

## 6.64 Reliance on external format strings [SHL]

### 6.64.1 Applicability to language

Java provides string classes that use to interpret the data read or format the output. These strings include all of the features described in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.64.1. The java.util.Scanner class allows for the parsing of strings using regular expressions. The java.lang.String allows for the creation and manipulation of strings. In Java, strings are immutable. Once a string object is created its data or state cannot be changed, instead a new string object is created. Though Java has classes that can help to avoid external format strings, strings originating outside of the trust boundary always need verification to ensure trust and before use. The standard Java library implementation will throw an exception if a string does not match the corresponding format specification.

Checking strings without normalizing them first can cause validation logic, and in particular, blacklisting comparisons, to be inaccurate. Similarly, if path names and other such strings with more than one possible representation are not canonicalized before comparing, inaccurate results can occur.

### 6.64.2 Guidance to language users

* Follow the guidance contained in ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019 clause 6.64.5.
* Normalize strings before validating them.
* Canonicalize path names and other strings that have more than one possible representation.
* Use Java classes for importing, exporting, and manipulating strings.

# 7. Language specific vulnerabilities for Java

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