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# SIGSEGV in receive\_xattr() on FreeBSD - qsort() called with wrong element count #871

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venglin opened yesterday



## Summary

`receive_xattr()` in `xattrs.c` calls `qsort()` with the count of xattr entries received from the wire (`count`), rather than the count of entries actually added to `temp_xattr` (`temp_xattr.count`). When any entries are skipped during receive-side filtering (via `continue`), `qsort` reads beyond the valid portion of the array, passing uninitialized or stale pointers to the comparator. The comparator calls `strcmp(xa->name, ...)` where `xa->name` is NULL, causing SIGSEGV.

## Crash Details

```
Signal: SIGSEGV (Segmentation fault)
Process: rsync --server -vIHogDtpAXrxe.iLsfxCIvu --delete --numeric-ids . <dst>
```



Thread backtrace:

```
#0  libc strcmp          - movdqu (%rdi,%rax), %xmm0 [rdi = 0x0 NULL]
#1  libc qsort           - calls comparator
#2  rsync receive_xattr - qsort(temp_xattr.items, count, sizeof(rsync_xa), ...)
#3  rsync send_file_list / process_file
```

The comparator is:

```
static int rsync_xa1_compare_names(const void *x1, const void *x2)
{
    const rsync_xa *xa1 = x1;
    const rsync_xa *xa2 = x2;
```



```

    return strcmp(xa1->name, xa2->name); // xa1->name or xa2->name is NULL
}

```

## Root Cause

In `receive_xattr()` (`xattrs.c`), `xattr` entries received from the network are processed in a loop. Several paths skip an entry without adding it to `temp_xattr`:

```

// path 1 – xattr filter
if (saw_xattr_filter) {
    if (name_is_excluded(name, NAME_IS_XATTR, ALL_FILTERS)) {
        free(ptr);
        continue; // NOT added to temp_xattr
    }
}

// path 2 – Linux: non-root, non-user namespace
if (am_root <= 0 && !HAS_PREFIX(name, USER_PREFIX)) {
    if (!am_root && !saw_xattr_filter) {
        free(ptr);
        continue; // NOT added to temp_xattr
    }
    ...
}

// path 3 – non-Linux (FreeBSD etc.): non-user namespace, non-root
} else {
    free(ptr);
    continue; // NOT added to temp_xattr
}

// path 4 – rsync.%FOO without -XX
if (preserve_xattrs < 2 && ...) {
    free(ptr);
    continue; // NOT added to temp_xattr
}

```



After the loop, the sort is unconditionally done using the wire count:

```

// BUG: uses 'count' (wire), not 'temp_xattr.count' (actual items added)
if (need_sort && count > 1)
    qsort(temp_xattr.items, count, sizeof (rsync_xa), rsync_xa1_compare_names);

```



The memory for `count` entries was pre-allocated at the start of the function:

```

if ((count = read_varint(f)) != 0) {
    (void)EXPAND_ITEM_LIST(&temp_xattr, rsync_xa, count);
}

```



```
temp_xattr.count = 0; // reset - slots beyond temp_xattr.count are uninitialized
}
```

When fewer than `count` entries are added, the trailing slots in `temp_xattr.items` contain either uninitialized memory (first call, fresh malloc) or stale data from a previous invocation (`temp_xattr` is static). Either way, `rsync_xa.name` (at offset +8 in the struct) is NULL or garbage, causing the comparator to crash.

## Trigger Condition

The crash is reliably triggered when the **sender** (e.g. Linux running as root with `-x`) transfers a file with extended attributes in a namespace other than `user.*` (e.g. `security.*`, `trusted.*`) to a **non-Linux receiver** (e.g. FreeBSD) running `rsync` as **non-root**. The non-Linux, non-root receiver filters out these namespaces ( `path 3` above), making `temp_xattr.count < count`, and then `qsort` crashes.

In the reported case the exact command on the server was:

```
rsync --server -vIHogDtpAXrxe.iLsfxCIvu --delete --numeric-ids . destination
```



## Fix

Replace `count` with `temp_xattr.count` in the `qsort` call:

```
--- a/xattrs.c
+++ b/xattrs.c
@@ -860,8 +860,8 @@ void receive_xattr(int f, struct file_struct *file)
     rxa->num = num;
 }

-   if (need_sort && count > 1)
-       qsort(temp_xattr.items, count, sizeof (rsync_xa), rsync_xal_compare_names);
+   if (need_sort && temp_xattr.count > 1)
+       qsort(temp_xattr.items, temp_xattr.count, sizeof (rsync_xa), rsync_xal_compare_names);


     ndx = rsync_xal_store(&temp_xattr); /* adds item to rsync_xal_l */
```



`rsync_xal_store()` already uses `xa.lp->count` (i.e. `temp_xattr.count`) correctly, so only the `qsort` call needs to change.

## Analysis Environment

- FreeBSD server (x86-64), rsync 3.4.1 as non-root user
- Linux client (aarch64), rsync sender as root
- Core file analysed with lldb: crash confirmed as `strcmp(NULL, ...)` inside `rsync_xa1_compare_names`, called from `qsort` in `receive_xattr`

 **Safari77** added a commit that references this issue [27 minutes ago](#)

SIGSEGV in receive\_xattr() [...](#)

71b6d0a

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