Spectre and Meltdown attacks

Meltdown and Spectre are two exploits of computer systems, that are both relatively recent in their discovery, and similar in their potential to cause damage and concern. These exploits make use of vulnerabilities found in modern processors and allow malicious programs to harvest data while it is being processed by the machine; data that the program in question would otherwise be unable to access. The nature of this vulnerability means that any data that gets processed by an effected processor can be maliciously accessed: including passwords, documents, bank details; any data that is being processed can be stolen.  
Meltdown and Spectre were both first reported January 2018 by three teams (Google Project Zero, Cyberus Technology and Graz University of Technology) (Anon. , 2020). Since their discovery, the extent and scope of the vulnerabilities has been shown to cover a vast portion of most modern processors.

References

ANON., 2020. *Meltdown and Spectre* [viewed 7 May 2020]. Available from: <https://meltdownattack.com/>