

Conquering the Human Race Smart Card Global Domination Nearing Completion

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Conquering the Human Race – Smart Card Global Domination Nearing Completion By the end of next year, there will be more smart cards than people occupying this planet. IMS Research's latest report on the smart card market projects that the installed base of smart cards is forecast to surpass the world's population during 2009, meaning that on average each person on the planet will be in possession of more than one smart card.

From relatively humble beginnings in 1983, it has taken 25 years for the smart card installed base to approach the level where, on average, everyone has at least one. By the end of 2009 the installed base is projected to have passed the 7 billion level, a level the global population won't reach until 2011. Furthermore, whereas previously smart card use was concentrated in specific markets and countries, the growing breadth of applications the market now addresses means that the use of smart cards is more widespread geographically than ever before.

So what are we using all these cards for? By far, for most of us, the most likely reason we own a smart card is for use within our cellular handsets, in the form of a SIM card. Not all handsets require them, but an estimated 2.7 billion did at the end of last year – stated Alex Green, the author of IMS Research's annual Smart Card and Semiconductors in Smart Cards report.

The other two sectors that are forecast to aid the cellular market in driving the card installed base past 7 billion are the banking sector and the government/health sector, the installed bases of which are both projected to pass the 1 billion level this year. Additionally both are forecast to continue growing significantly, as banks look to improve security and reduce fraud and as governments roll out large national infrastructure projects that utilise smart cards. Typical examples of the latter are biometric passports, driver's licenses, national I.D. card schemes and healthcare applications, continued Green.

Along with retail loyalty cards, pay TV conditional access, payphone cards, transportation and physical access cards the next big mile stone of 10 billion is in fact less than five years away!