

Broadband Subscribers Surge Past 150 Million

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IMS Research has revealed that the number of broadband subscribers has just passed 150 million worldwide. According to the company's latest broadband database update, this represented an increase of 51 million since the beginning of 2004. This tremendous rate of growth shows no signs of slowing, and IMS Research is forecasting that the number of broadband subscribers will surpass 400 million during 2009.

DSL continues to put distance between itself and cable as the most popular broadband technology, with total DSL subscribers passing the 100 million mark in early 2005. "ADSL will remain the dominant broadband technology, especially as higher-speed variants such as ADSL2+ become more widely deployed," states Melissa Yocom, broadband analyst with IMS Research. "However, we expect to see strong growth for VDSL, especially when used in conjunction with extended fibre deployments for TV over IP applications. These higher speed DSL options are going to be critical if the telcos are serious about offering a true triple play of voice, data and video that can offer sufficient simultaneous video streams to go head-to-head with the cable operators."

The uptake of cable broadband is also proceeding at a rapid pace, with much upside potential in markets such as Germany, where initial roll-out has been slow. By the end of 2009, IMS Research is forecasting that there will be 83 million cable broadband subscribers worldwide. However, the gap between cable and DSL subscriber levels is set to widen, due to the fact that, while there are over 1 billion telephone subscriber lines in the world, most of which could be DSL enabled, there are only around 530 million homes worldwide that are passed by cable.

"Although most of the attention for future broadband development is focussed on the DSL and cable sectors, we should not forget the niche broadband technologies," comments Yocom. "Many of the telcos are considering fibre-to-the-premises for green field and selected builds, and emerging technologies such as Broadband Powerline (BPL), WiMAX, and even satellite, offer potential to extend the reach of broadband into rural areas."

Asia still leads the way in terms of broadband installations, currently accounting for around 43% of subscribers worldwide. However, recent price reductions have led to strong subscriber growth in Europe, and the region has just passed the Americas as the next largest broadband market.

Further detailed information on broadband uptake and equipment shipments and revenues by technology type are given by country in IMS Research's online Broadband Access Database. This subscription service also gives five-year growth forecasts for all of these sectors, and provides commentary on recent market changes.