

Estimate: Global cell subscriptions pass 5 billion

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(AP) -- The number of wireless service subscriptions worldwide passed 5 billion this week, according to an estimate by LM Ericsson AB, the Swedish maker of wireless equipment.

The estimate is based on data from carriers worldwide, and compares to the global population of nearly 6.9 billion people, as estimated by the U.S. Census Bureau. In 2000, there were 720 million [wireless](#) subscriptions, Ericsson said.

It's not uncommon for people to have multiple subscriptions for phones or other wireless devices, like laptops, so Ericsson's figure indicates that somewhat less than 5 billion people have wireless phone service.

Most of the recent growth comes from [developing countries](#) like India and China. In developed countries like the U.S., the number of new [cell phone](#) subscriptions has fallen drastically in the last six months. Carriers are hoping to keep growth going by enticing more people to use multiple wireless devices, like e-book readers, tablet computers and Internet-connected GPS units.

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