

Crypto Yield 2025

Retail Consumer Report

m+re

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Executive Summary

Crypto yield products are gaining traction among retail investors, but adoption is heavily skewed toward centralized platforms. Our research estimates that over 20 million people are earning yield through centralized exchanges (CEXs), whereas only around 500,000 are doing so via decentralized finance (DeFi). This stark gap means mainstream users overwhelmingly trust and use familiar, custodial platforms for yield, while DeFi remains a niche for early adopters.

Our survey of retail crypto users reveals a conservative, short-term mindset driving decisions around yield. Over 60% of respondents typically hold crypto less than one year, and their willingness to seek yield hinges on returns significantly higher than traditional finance. Most users won't move assets for single-digit APYs; a 6% annual yield is generally the minimum to catch their interest.

Trust and liquidity are paramount. The biggest barriers keeping nearly half of retail participants away from yield products are fears of not being able to withdraw funds easily, doubts about security, and lack of understanding. Users need to know they can exit anytime and that their assets are safe. Reflecting this, when asked what would make a crypto yield product “irresistible,” the top feature by far was flexible, no-lockup withdrawals, followed by guarantees of fund security (e.g. insurance or protection). Actual yield rate, while important, ranked behind these safety and access factors.

Strategic Implications: To expand crypto yield adoption, platforms must prioritize the fundamentals that retail investors demand. DeFi protocols, if they aim to attract mainstream users, will need to dramatically simplify user experiences and visibly improve safety to overcome current perceptions. Investors and product developers alike should recognize that user-friendly, secure, and flexible offerings will ultimately win out over those simply promising the highest returns with complexity or restrictions.

Research Goals

In crypto, success is often measured by onchain metrics like TVL and transaction volumes. While important, these numbers do not fully capture the human side of adoption.

This report focuses on the experiences and perspectives of retail consumers. Our aim is to understand how everyday users think about, trust, and engage with yield products. Specifically, we set out to:

- Explore the motivations behind earning yield from a consumer perspective. Assess levels of trust and usage habits across different platforms.
- Identify barriers and concerns that may prevent broader adoption.
- Capture the features and expectations retail users are looking for in the future.

This report shifts the lens from onchain activity to retail consumer insight, aiming to define the true size of the retail market and uncover what people actually want from crypto yield in 2025.

Report Structure

Part 1:

Sizing the Market

Onchain metrics like TVL and transaction volumes are useful for tracking capital flows, but they do not reveal how many people are actually participating. These figures are often skewed by large holders, recycled liquidity, and custodial aggregation.

Adoption is ultimately measured by people, not just assets. In this section, we estimate the scale of retail participation in crypto yield.

Our goal is not a precise headcount, which is impossible to obtain, but a credible range that reflects the true order of magnitude. To get there, we draw on survey data, platform disclosures, and market benchmarks to approximate how many retail users actively engage with yield products across centralized exchanges, DeFi, and custodial platforms.

Looking at users instead of capital gives a more accurate picture of the addressable market, helps forecast adoption trends, and supports product, compliance, and go-to-market decisions. It also grounds strategy in the realities of consumer behavior, rather than abstract capital flows.

Part 2:

Retail Consumer Insights

Knowing how many people participate in crypto yield is only half the story. The other half is understanding what they actually want. Market size shows the opportunity, but consumer preferences determine whether it can be realized.

Retail adoption is shaped less by protocol design and more by human factors: motivations, trust, and the everyday trade-offs people make. Why do individuals decide to use yield products? What convinces them their money is safe? How much return makes the risk worth it? These questions can only be answered by listening to consumers directly.

In this section, we examine the retail mindset around yield: motivations, trust signals, preferred platforms, barriers, risk tolerance, return expectations, and the language that improves understanding. Together, these insights reveal how mainstream consumers view the category today.

Understanding these dynamics matters because growth depends not only on more users but on products and platforms that align with real consumer needs.

Part 1:

Sizing the Market

Methodology

We estimate the size of both centralized (CEX) and decentralized (DeFi) yield audiences. This combined view shows how many people across crypto actively use staking and earn products today.

Estimating the CEX Yield User Base

We use a conservative approach to gauge how many users on centralized exchanges (CEXs) participate in yield, staking, or earn products. **Based on a combination of surveys and platform data, we assume roughly 10 to 15% of total CEX users engage with these earn features.**

In reality, the true adoption could be higher, as several data points suggest uptake around 20 to 25% (or more) on major platforms.

For example, Binance's own 27,000-user survey indicated about 25% of users "actively utilize" Binance Earn (1), and an independent CryptoQuant 2024 industry survey (2) found 28% of crypto users have used exchange "earn" products. We lean toward the lower 10 to 15% range to err on the side of caution, acknowledging that some exchanges see significantly higher engagement.

Platform-Specific Insights

To refine our estimates, we examined public data and signals from two of the largest exchanges, Binance and Coinbase. These case studies illustrate how we gauged yield user penetration:

Binance

Binance's internal survey (late 2024) (1) showed roughly 25% of respondents "actively utilizing Binance Earn," suggesting roughly a quarter of Binance's users engage with yield products.

On-chain clues: Binance's ETH staking token (WBETH) accounts for a substantial share of staked Ether. As of mid-2025, WBETH held about 20% of the liquid staking market with over \$9 billion in ETH staked (3). This implies on the order of a few million ETH staked through Binance's platform, a massive pooled value consistent with millions of users participating.

Scale context: Binance reported over 250 million registered users worldwide by the end of 2024 (4). Even if only 10% of its user base uses Earn products, that would be on the order of 25 million users; at 25% adoption it would exceed 50 million.

Takeaway:

It is reasonable to estimate on Binance that roughly 20 to 30% of active users use Earn (aligned with the 25% survey figure), meaning tens of millions of Binance users are yield-active.

Coinbase

Hard numbers: Coinbase's disclosures (5) provide concrete evidence of user staking engagement. As of Q4 2023, Coinbase reported \$9.4 billion in customer crypto assets being actively staked (retail) on its platform, with additional institutional staking on top.

In 2022, Coinbase customers collectively earned over \$440 million in staking rewards, which the company noted was about 20% of its transaction revenue for that year, a significant share underscoring the popularity of staking among users.

User participation: By early 2023, over 3.5 million Coinbase customers (6) were participating in the staking rewards program.

Scale context: Coinbase reached 120 million total monthly users in 2025 (7). Broader impact: Coinbase alone custodied about 11% of all staked ETH in the network by 2025 (7), reflecting how significant CEXs are in the staking ecosystem. Centralized platforms in aggregate make up about 40% of staked ETH, though this does not directly translate to user count.

Takeaway:

On Coinbase, roughly a quarter of its active users have used staking/yield features (several million users), aligning with the idea that a single-digit percentage of total registered users, but a much larger share of active users, are yield-earning customers.

References

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Estimating Users on Top Crypto Exchanges (CEXs)

This analysis focuses on the five largest centralized exchanges by reported user base: Binance, Coinbase, Crypto.com, KuCoin, and OKX. These exchanges were selected because:

1. Market Coverage: Together they capture the majority of global CEX retail participation.
2. Data Availability: They consistently disclose headline user metrics (registered accounts or monthly active users).
3. Representativeness: Other platforms are materially smaller and would not significantly change global totals.

Reported user accounts across the top five exceed 500 million. However, many individuals maintain accounts on more than one exchange, creating duplication. The exact level of overlap across exchange user bases is unknown, as no platform publishes this data, and it cannot be estimated accurately with available information.

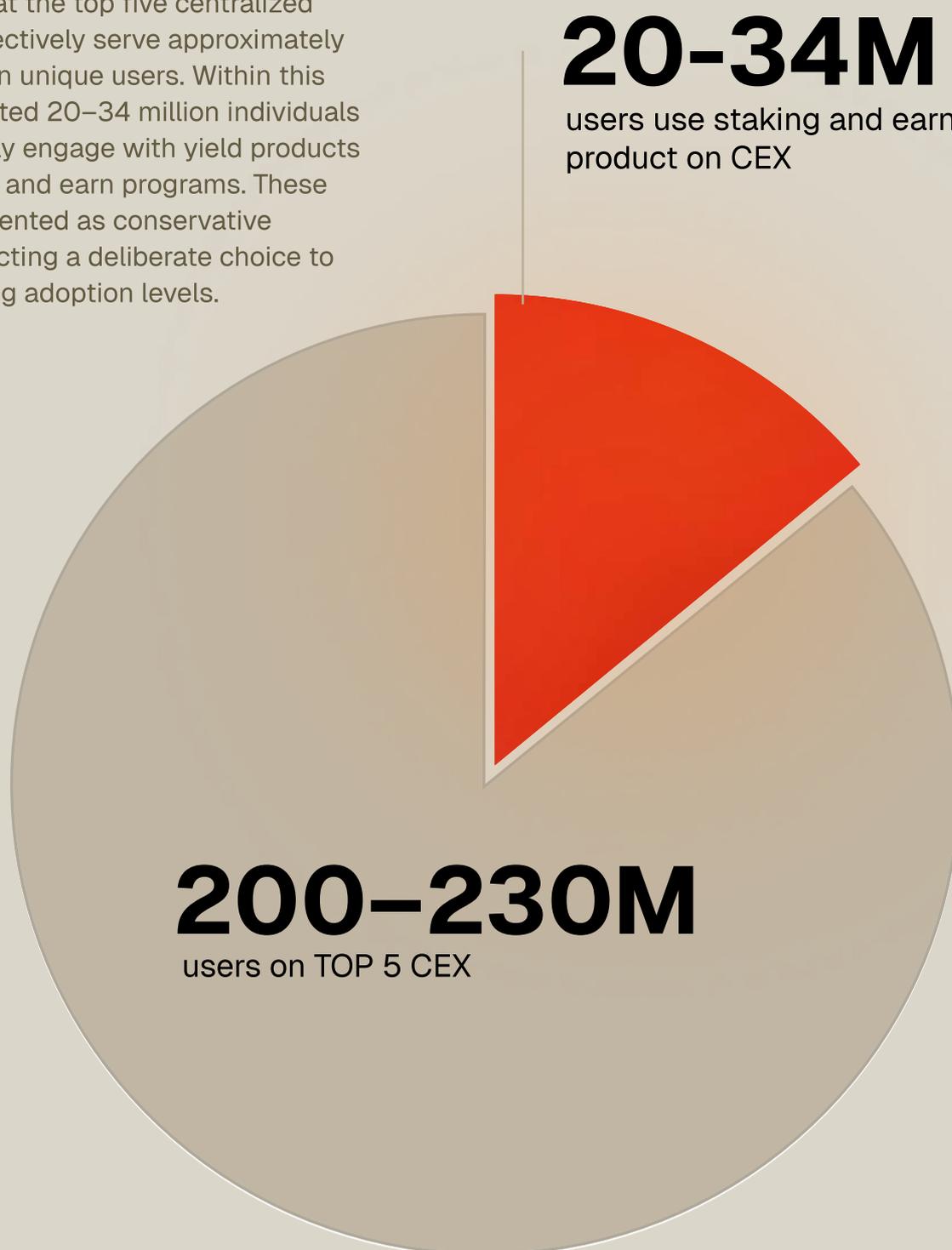
To present a realistic estimate, we apply a conservative adjustment and size the unique audience across the top five CEXs at approximately 200–230 million individuals.

Top 5 CEX User Base

Exchange	Estimated Users	Source
Binance	~250M registered users (end-2024)	https://www.binance.com/en/square/post/01-02-2025-binance-surpasses-250-million-global-registered-users-eyes-1-billion-milestone-18393134801706
Coinbase	~120M monthly users (2025)	https://coinlaw.io/coinbase-users-statistics/
Crypto.com	~100M global users (2024)	https://crypto.com/en/company-news/cryptocom-surpasses-100-million-global-users
KuCoin	~40M registered users (2025)	https://www.kucoin.com/blog/kucoin-surpasses-40-million-registered-users-demonstrating-commitment-to-compliance-and-innovation
OKX	~60M users (2025)	https://www.okx.com/join

Adoption of Yield Products on Top CEXs

We estimate that the top five centralized exchanges collectively serve approximately 200–230 million unique users. Within this base, an estimated 20–34 million individuals (10–15%) actively engage with yield products such as staking and earn programs. These figures are presented as conservative estimates, reflecting a deliberate choice to avoid overstating adoption levels.



Estimating the DeFi Yield User Base

We focused on the top five protocols that provide earning opportunities (staking, lending, yield) ranked by total value locked (TVL) to get a clear picture of where most of today's DeFi activity takes place. While there are hundreds of other protocols with meaningful traction, the top five alone capture the largest share of users and capital, providing a solid order-of-magnitude estimate of the market.

We left out Binance staked ETH since it is exchange-owned, and our goal here is to understand the DeFi side only. This snapshot (August 25, 2025) is a sufficient proxy for estimating a representative DeFi yield audience, as it covers the biggest protocols that account for the bulk of user participation.

Protocol Rankings										
TVL										
Name	Category	TVL	1d Change	7d Change	1m Change	Mcap/TVL	Fees 24h	Revenue 24h	Holdings	Rev
1 Lido 5 chains	Liquid Staking	\$40.172b	-6.57%	+4.52%	+18.90%	0.029	\$3.27m	\$326,636		
2 Aave 17 chains	Lending	\$39.745b	-3.08%	+7.00%	+18.58%	0.12	\$3.24m	\$448,645		
3 EigenLayer 1 chain	Restaking	\$20.839b	-6.43%	+3.68%	+14.53%	0.02	\$13,132			
4 Binance staked ETH 2 chains	Liquid Staking	\$15.147b	-6.47%	+8.68%	+37.17%		\$1.12m	\$112,105		
5 Ethena 1 chain		\$12.258b	+0.36%	+6.18%	+64.89%	0.35	\$19,840	\$19,840		
6 ether.fi 1 chain		\$11.871b	-5.81%	+2.76%	+16.61%	0.045	\$1.71m	\$912,327		
7 Pendle 10 chains	Yield	\$10.295b	-0.10%	+9.47%	+59.58%	0.087	\$52,182	\$50,210		

DeFiLlama, August 25, 2025

DeFi Yield

We identified the top five protocols by total value locked (TVL) on DeFi Llama and analyzed their user counts using publicly available data.

Since there is no single standardized method for measuring exact user numbers onchain, we relied on open sources to produce an approximate estimate.

Based on the data from the top five protocols, we estimate the total audience at roughly 500,000–700,000 unique users. While it is technically possible to analyze exact overlaps across protocols, this adds little value for our purpose, as the objective is to establish an order-of-magnitude view rather than a precise count.

Protocol	Users / Holders	Monthly Traffic (Ahref)	Source
Lido	~549k holders (Ethereum)	~24.7k monthly visitors	https://etherscan.io/token/0xae7ab96520de3a18e5e111b5eaab095312d7fe84
Aave	~118k daily new users	~92.4k monthly visitors	https://dune.com/queries/1950279/3218159
EigenLayer	~37.5k users	n/a	https://dune.com/hashed_official/eigenlayer
Ether.fi	~144k total users	n/a	https://dune.com/0xludic/etherfi-dashboard
Pendle	~26k monthly users	n/a	https://tokenterminal.com/explorer/projects/pendle/metrics/user-mau

Crypto Yield

Based on exchange disclosures, platform-level data, and conservative penetration assumptions, we estimate that over 20 million people have used Earn or staking products on centralized exchanges, while only about 500,000 unique users participate in decentralized earning opportunities (staking, lending, yield).

The exact numbers may shift, but the scale is clear: CEX hosts tens of millions of yield users, while DeFi remains a much smaller, early-adopter market.

20–36M
users

CEX

0.5–0.7M
users

DeFI

Part 2:

Retail Consumer Insights

Audience

This part of the research focuses on U.S. retail consumers across a broad demographic range, from ages 18 to 99 and across all income levels. Out of 150 respondents, about two-thirds (67%) have owned and used crypto, while one-third (33%) have never engaged with it.

For this study, we analyzed only the active crypto owners. This ensures the insights reflect the actual behaviors, preferences,

and barriers of people who already interact with crypto, rather than mixing in those with no exposure.

This establishes a baseline audience of mainstream, everyday users who represent how retail consumers are approaching crypto yield in 2025.

Audience Profile

Region:	United States all regions
Age Range:	18–99
Gender:	Balanced <small>mix of male and female</small>
Respondents Income Range:	\$0 – 200k+
Sample Size:	150 respondents

Insights are based on the 67% of respondents who currently own and use crypto.

The survey was conducted with a representative sample of U.S. retail consumers across all regions, age groups, and income levels. Respondents were recruited through a mainstream online research panel to ensure balanced demographic coverage.

Pre-Qualification and Audience Representativeness

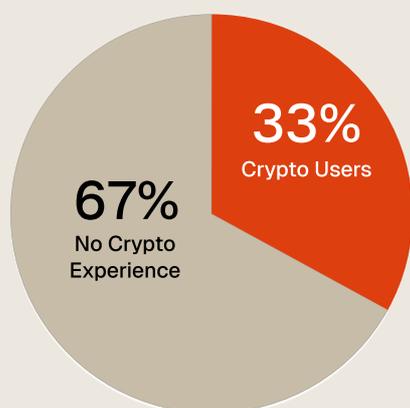
Benchmarking Against National Ownership Rates

U.S. Baseline

The Motley Fool's 2025 Cryptocurrency Investor Trends Survey estimates that approximately 21% of U.S. adults own cryptocurrency, with generational ownership rates ranging from the low 20s to the high 20s depending on cohort. This benchmark provides a reliable measure of overall household penetration in the U.S. market.

Our Sample

In our survey, the share of respondents who own or use cryptocurrency is significantly higher than the national baseline. This indicates that our sample represents a more crypto-engaged and sophisticated retail audience than the average U.S. adult population.

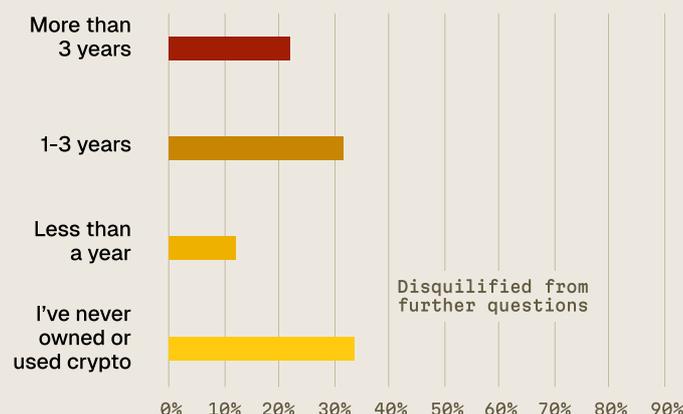


Retail Consumer Crypto Participation

Implications for Interpretation

This study is not intended to estimate national household penetration of cryptocurrency ownership. Instead, it is designed to profile active retail behavior around earning yield. The higher ownership rate in our sample ensures that insights reflect the experiences and preferences of retail users who are already engaged in the ecosystem. This makes the findings especially relevant for understanding adoption dynamics and product-market fit within the active retail crypto segment.

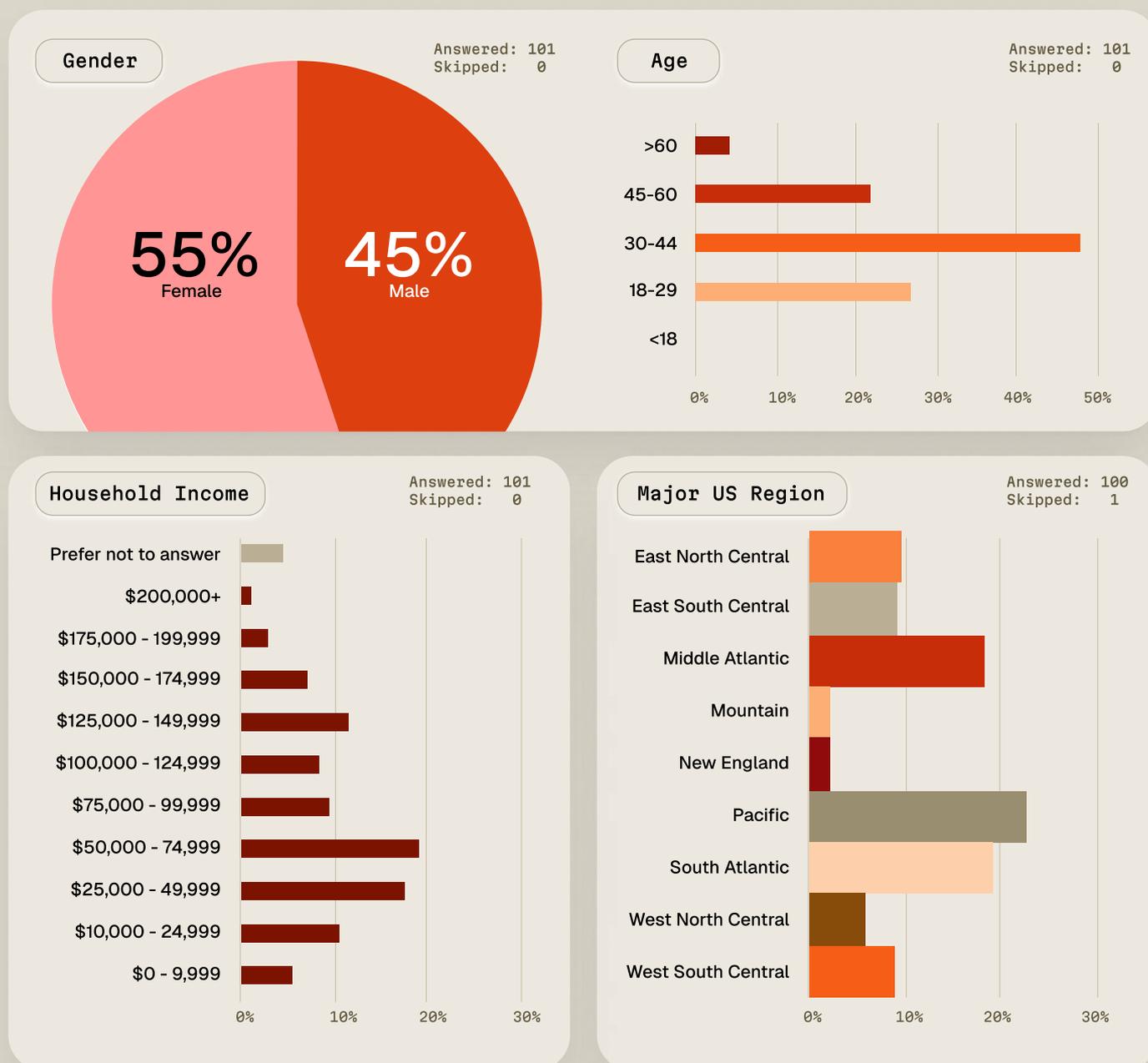
How long have you owned or used cryptocurrency (in any way)?



Respondent Demographics

The demographic profile aligns with known patterns of crypto adoption: younger, tech-forward, and middle-to-upper income cohorts are overrepresented relative to the general population.

This makes the audience appropriate for analyzing retail behavior in crypto yield products, since it reflects the demographic segments most active in the space.



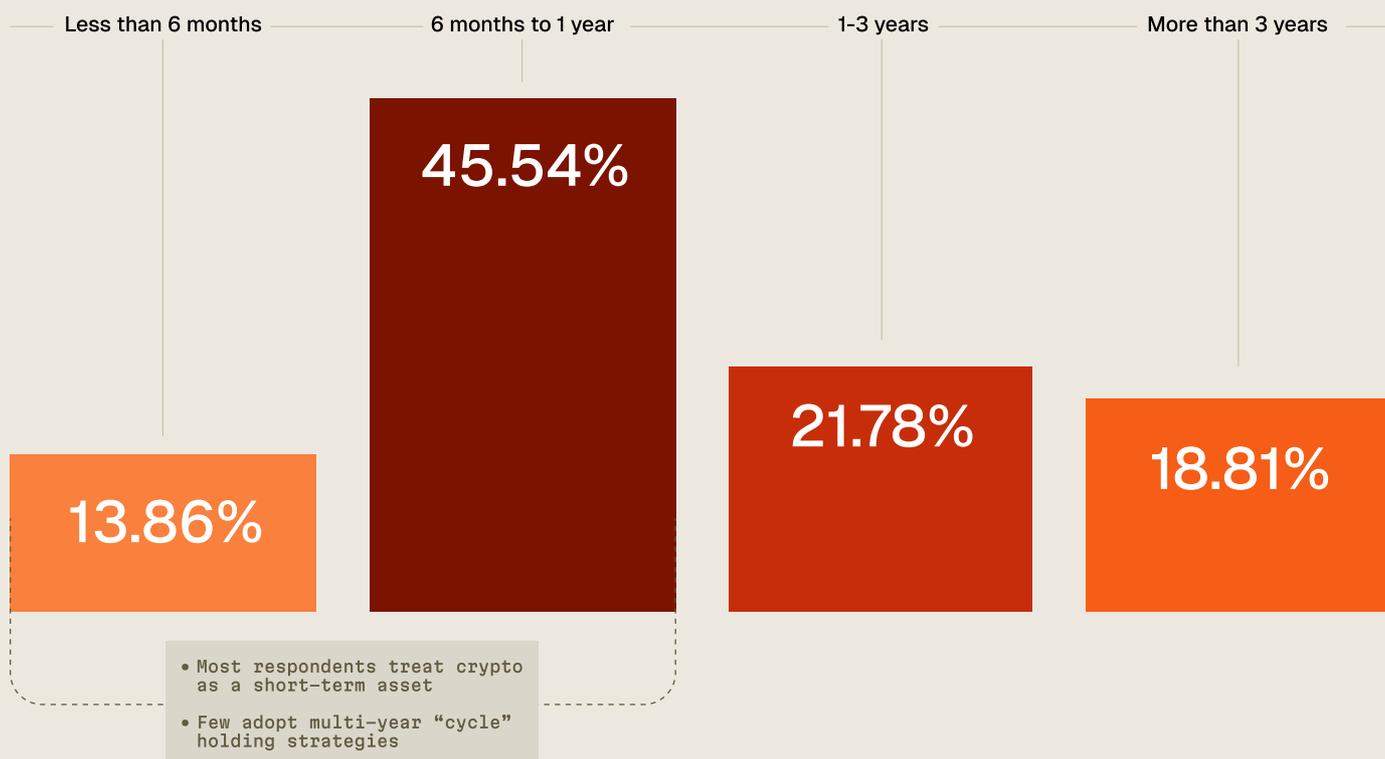
Holding Period

A majority of respondents report short holding periods for their crypto assets. Over 60% typically hold for less than one year before selling or moving assets. Only a small minority report holding beyond three years, indicating that long-term investment horizons remain rare within this sample.

Although there is a common view in the crypto space that major crypto assets are best held through “4- year cycles,” our findings indicate that this behavior is not typical among retail users.

Instead, short-term thinking and active rotation prevail, suggesting that many participants approach crypto more like a speculative asset than a long-term investment.

For your crypto asset, what is your typical holding period before selling or moving it?



Focus on Top 5 Crypto Assets

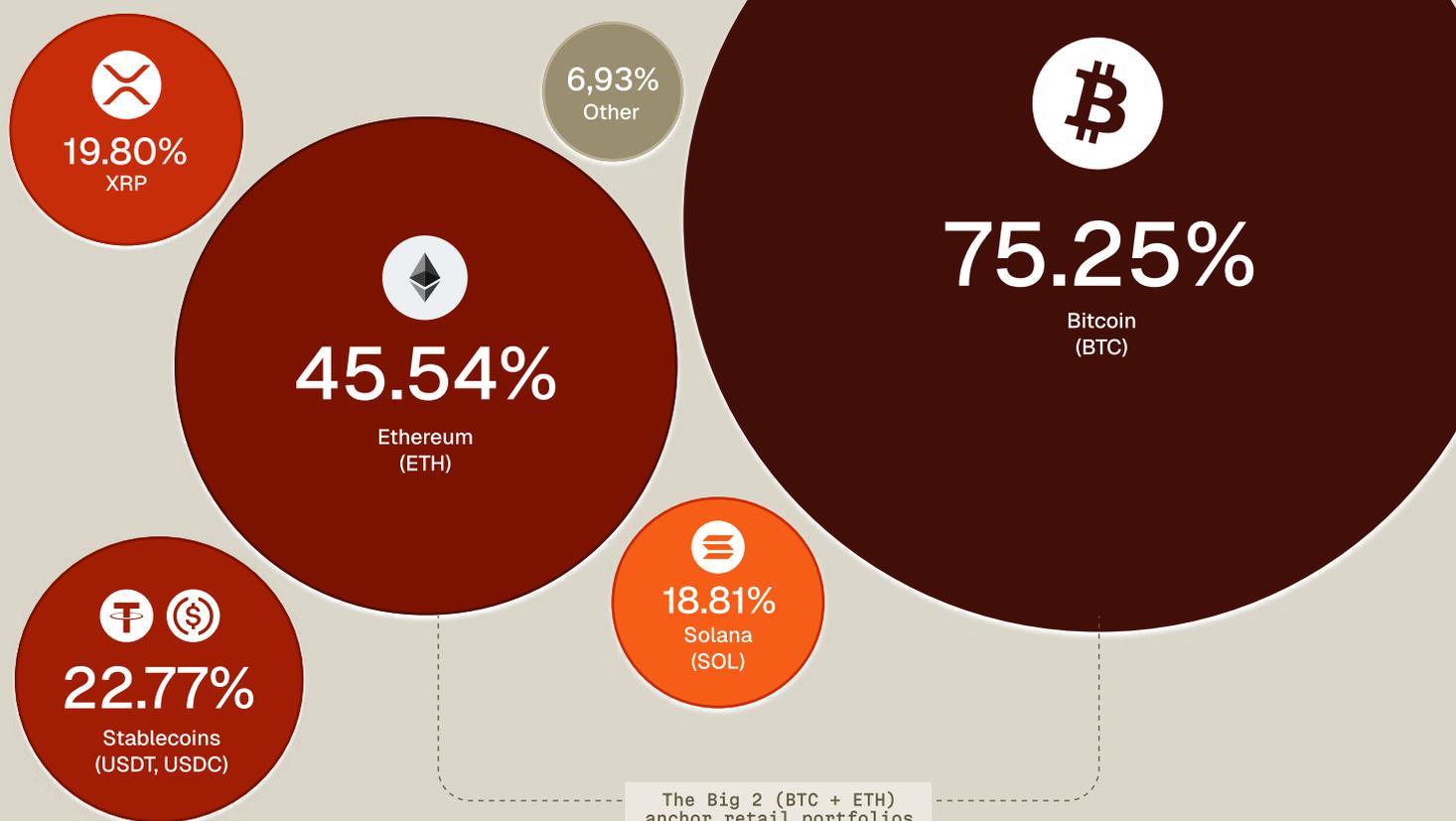
For this survey, we concentrated on the five most widely held assets rather than presenting a long-tail list. This focus ensures that insights are clear, statistically meaningful, and directly tied to where retail yield behavior actually takes place.

A shorter, high-relevance list avoids recall bias and reduces noise from rarely held tokens.

Yield instruments, liquidity, and infrastructure are most developed around the leading assets, making insights from these holdings the most actionable.

The Top 5 assets account for the vast majority of retail ownership and trading, and are therefore where yield-related decisions are concentrated.

Which cryptocurrencies do you currently hold or have held in the past? (Select all that apply)



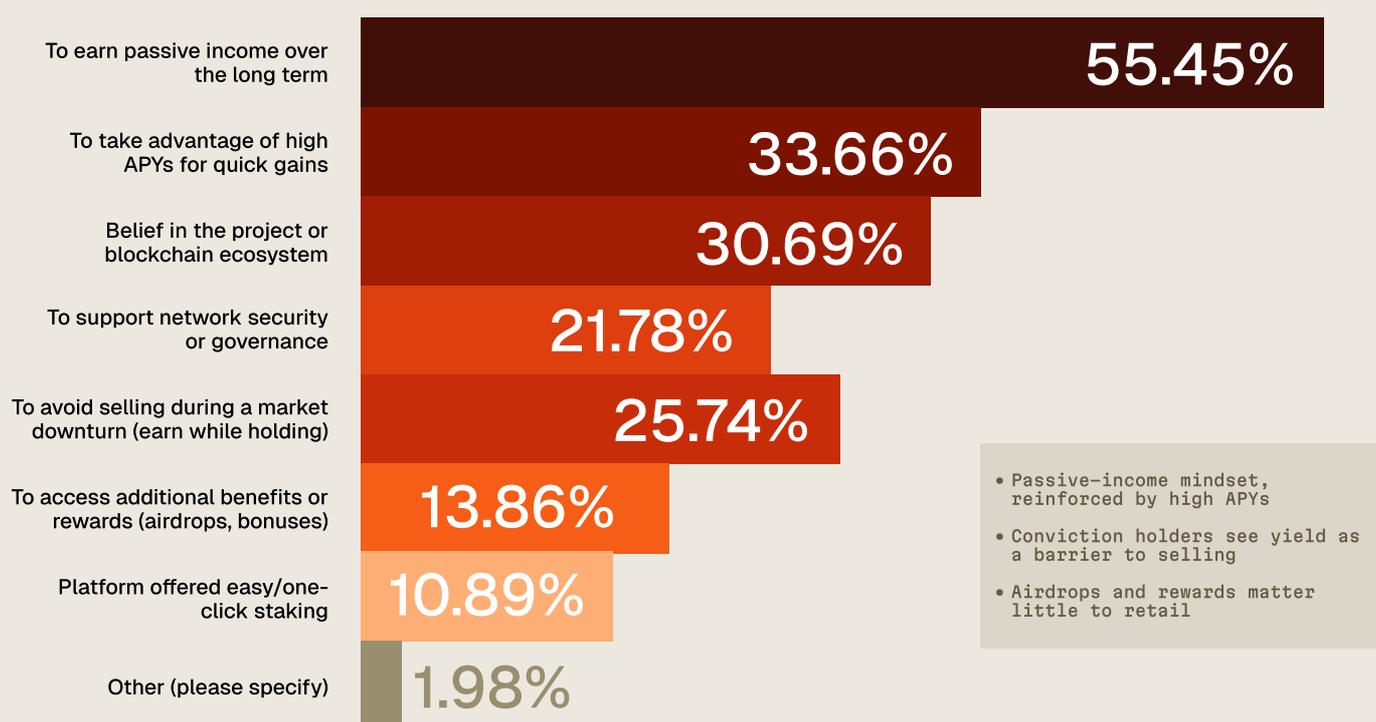
Reasoning on Earning Crypto

For most retail participants yield is seen as a form of passive income, but one that only makes sense while APYs are attractive. In other words, earning interest allows them to feel like their crypto is “working” even if they aren’t actively trading.

For those with strong conviction in the assets they hold, yield serves a different psychological purpose: it becomes a reason not to sell. By staking or depositing, they justify holding through downturns, turning what could be idle assets into something productive and reinforcing their long-term position.

At the same time, airdrops, points, and reward mechanics barely register with retail users. Unlike crypto natives, who often chase these mechanics, the mainstream audience places little weight on such features. Their motivations are more grounded in income generation and portfolio discipline rather than ecosystem incentives.

What was your main reason for staking or depositing your crypto for earning yield?



Preferred Yield Platforms

Retail users overwhelmingly turn to centralized exchanges when earning yield. Consumer apps rank second, while direct DeFi use is almost negligible. A quarter of respondents have never earned yield at all. It's not only about yield, it's about where the users already are. Exchanges have the largest user bases, and they remove almost every point of friction that DeFi still struggles with:

Trust and accountability:

recognizable brands, customer support, proof-of-reserves messaging, and tax documentation.

Friction and UX:

one login, fiat on-ramps, no wallets or seed phrases, no gas fees, no bridging.

Predictability:

simple APRs, auto-earn toggles, “withdraw anytime” options—perceived as safer than variable DeFi rates.

Default bias:

assets already sit on exchanges; the Earn button is right there.

Risk perception:

smart contract exploits feel abstract, while self-custody errors feel personal—so users outsource custody.

While the DeFi space continues to innovate, mainstream retail remains far from it. Yield adoption is happening inside exchange ecosystems because that's where scale, trust, and usability converge.

These findings align with Part 1: Sizing the Market, which showed that centralized exchange earn products attract audiences an order of magnitude greater than DeFi.

Have you ever earned yield on your crypto?

Yes, on a centralized exchange
(e.g., Binance, Coinbase)

47.52%

Yes, on a consumer yield app
(e.g., Nexo, Celsius, BlockFi)

22.77%

Yes, on a DeFi platform
(e.g., Aave, Curve, Lido)

5.94%

No, never

23.76%

- CEXs dominate yield: scale + trust + simplicity
- DeFi is still too distant for retail

Barriers to Earning Yield

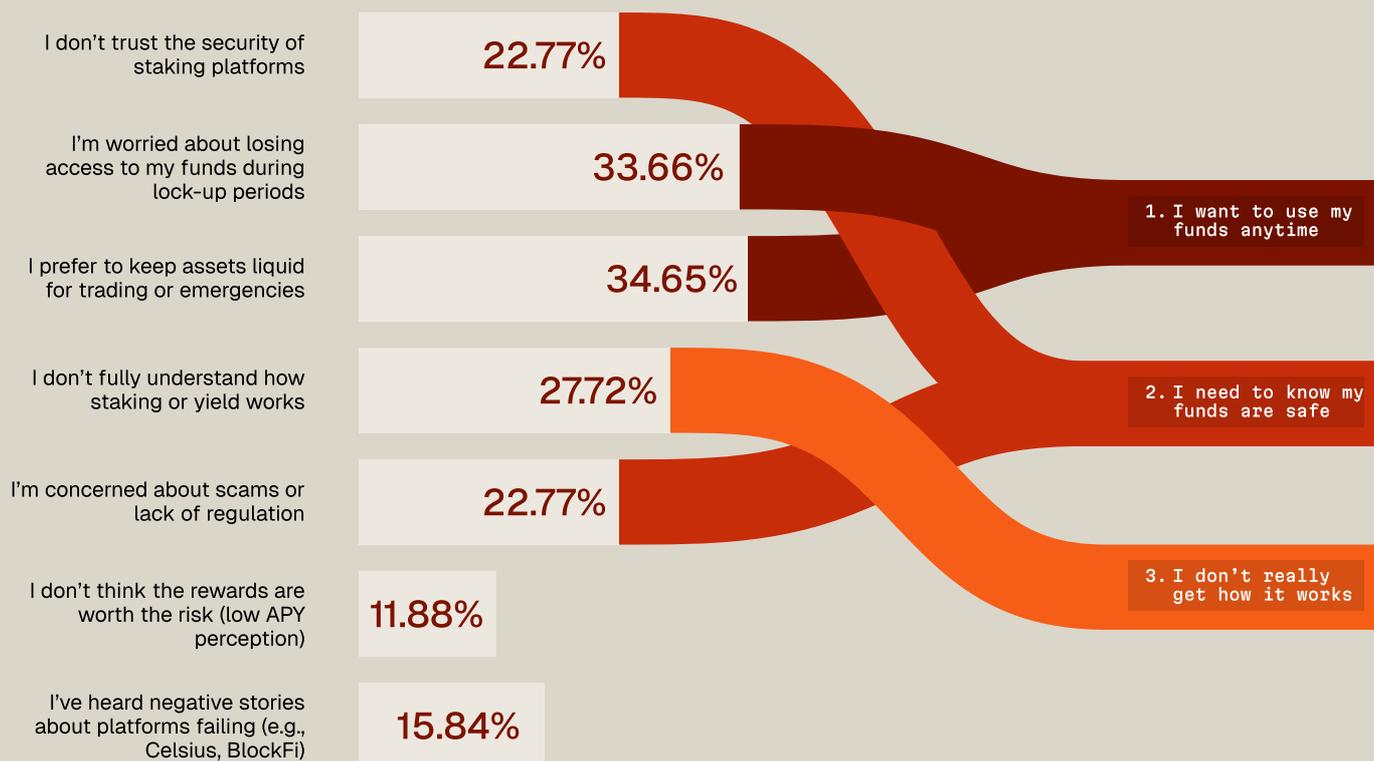
Retail investors avoid yield products mainly because of three concerns. The first is liquidity. People want their funds to be available at any time, and the idea of lock-ups makes them uncomfortable, especially in such a volatile asset class.

The second concern is security. Many worry about whether platforms can be trusted, and past collapses or stories of scams reinforce the perception that yield products are risky.

The third barrier is understanding. A large share of retail users simply do not feel confident that they know how staking or yield actually works. If something is unclear, the default choice is to stay out.

Overall, the findings show that yield adoption is not limited by lack of interest in returns. It is limited by fears about losing access to funds, fears about safety, and confusion about the mechanics. For retail, yield products will only scale if they feel liquid, safe, and easy to understand.

If you haven't staked or earned yield on crypto before, what is the main reason?



Wording to Describe “Crypto Yield”

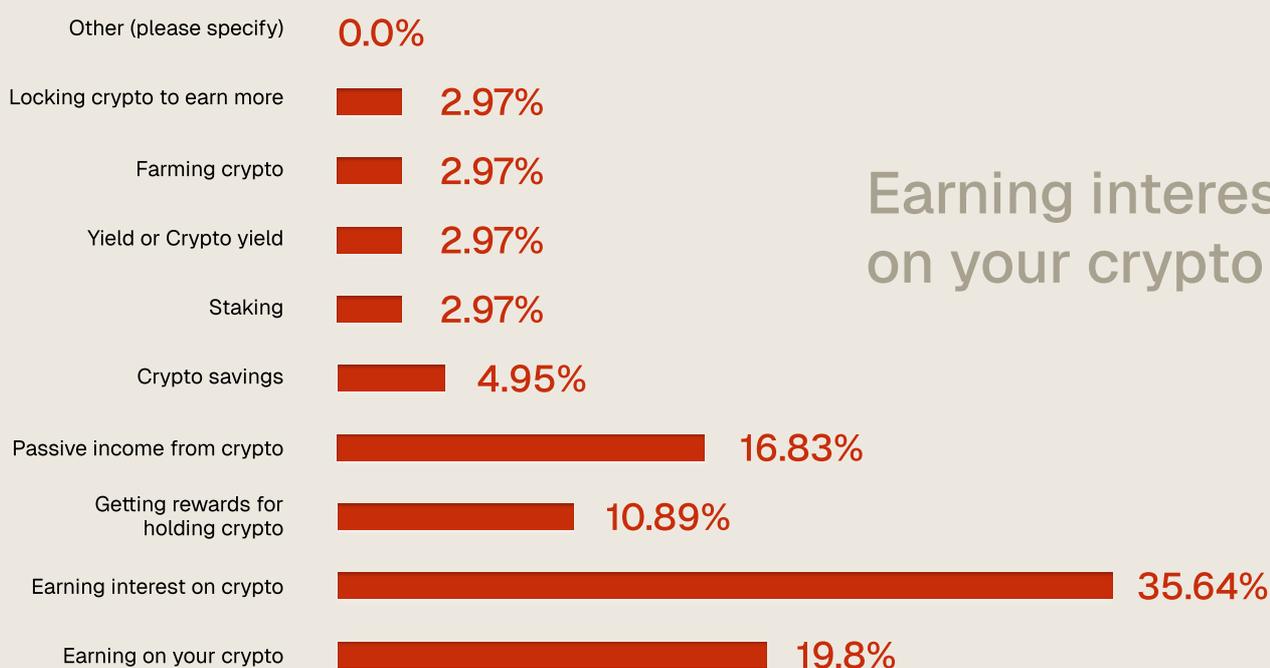
Language makes or breaks understanding. When retail investors were asked which phrasing made the most sense, the clear winner was “earning interest on your crypto.” It connects to something familiar - bank savings without requiring technical knowledge.

The next-best phrase was “passive income from crypto,” which also frames yield in everyday financial language.

By contrast, terms like staking, yield, or farming barely registered. These words may be common in crypto-native circles, but for mainstream users they create distance rather than clarity.

For retail adoption, yield needs to be explained in simple, traditional financial terms.

If you were explaining the idea of earning interest on your crypto to a friend, which of these phrases would be easiest to understand?



Minimum APY Retail Will Consider

Retail users show little interest in moving their crypto for small returns. Yields of 1–2% are almost irrelevant, and even 3–5%, which would compete with banks or treasuries, are not enough to motivate most people.

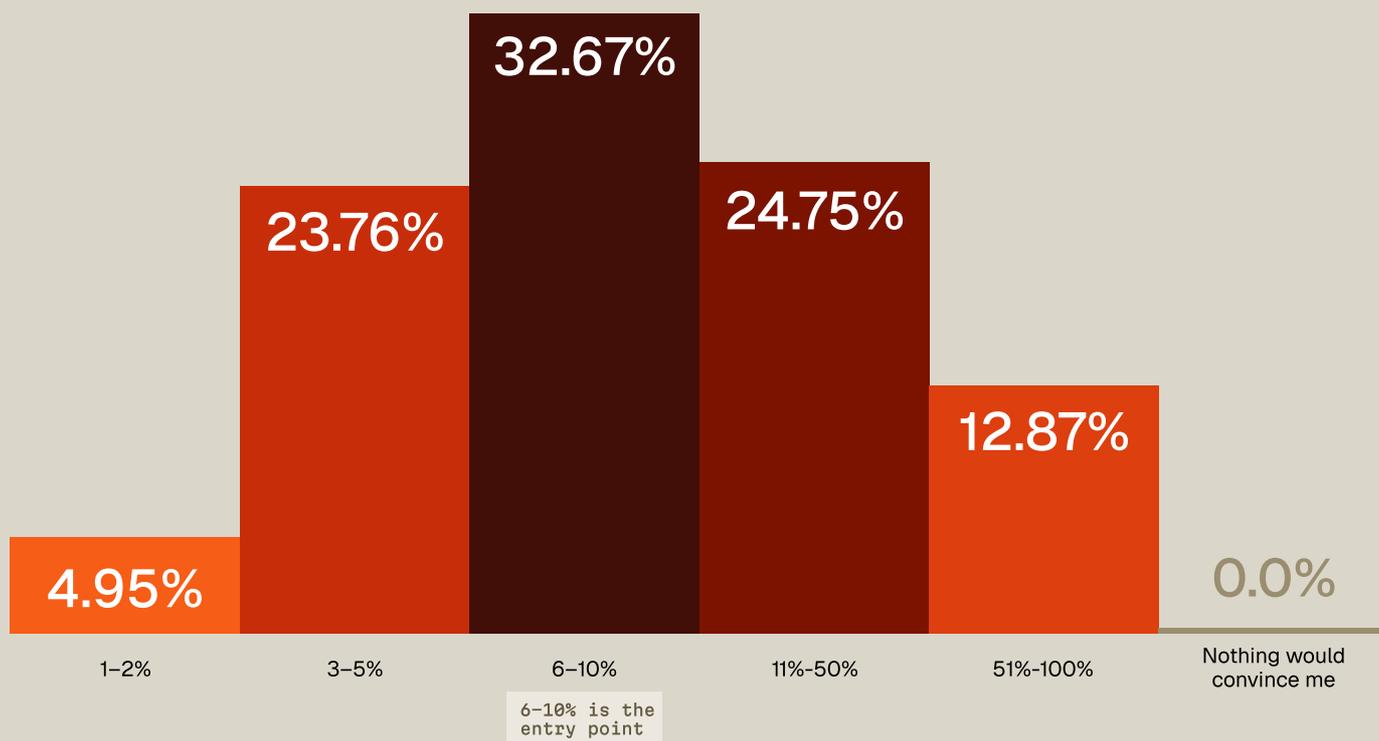
Instead, the majority see 6%+ as the minimum threshold where yield becomes attractive.

For many, crypto itself is already a risky asset. Yield is therefore treated as a risk-premium product rather than a conservative holding.

The bar is higher, and investors expect compensation that feels meaningfully better than traditional finance benchmarks.

In practice, yield is not judged against safety or consistency but against the idea that crypto should deliver a premium. This also explains why speculative yield bursts, even when short-lived, capture attention, because they fit retail's expectation of what crypto is supposed to deliver.

What minimum return (APY, Annual Percentage Yield) would make you seriously consider staking or depositing your BTC/XRP/ETH?



Why Users Fear Yield

Retail investors see the biggest risk in yield products as the possibility of losing their money or not being able to access it when needed. This concern shows up in different ways: worries about platforms going bankrupt, hacks or exploits, smart contract failures, or lock-up terms that prevent withdrawals.

Retail investors do not reject yield outright. They hesitate because they are not sure their money will remain secure and accessible. For broader adoption, yield products must focus first on trust, transparency,

and liquidity before competing on yield percentages.

Platforms that want to expand adoption need to show:

- Transparent proof of reserves and segregation of funds.
- Clear withdrawal rules that make exit simple and fast.
- Risk explanations in plain, accessible language.

What's your biggest fear about earning yield on crypto?

42.57%

Platform going bankrupt (like Celsius or BlockFi)

39.6%

Not being able to withdraw when needed because of lock-up terms

31.68%

Smart contract bugs leading to funds being locked or stolen

41.58%

Hacks or security breaches causing loss of funds (e.g., DeFi exploits)

9.9%

Regulatory crackdown freezing platforms (e.g., sudden government actions)

24.75%

Price drop of my asset during the staking period

Adoption Drivers

In a volatile asset class, the feature that moves retail first is the ability to exit at any time. Instant, no-lockup withdrawal tells users they stay in control and can reverse the decision if markets change or cash is needed.

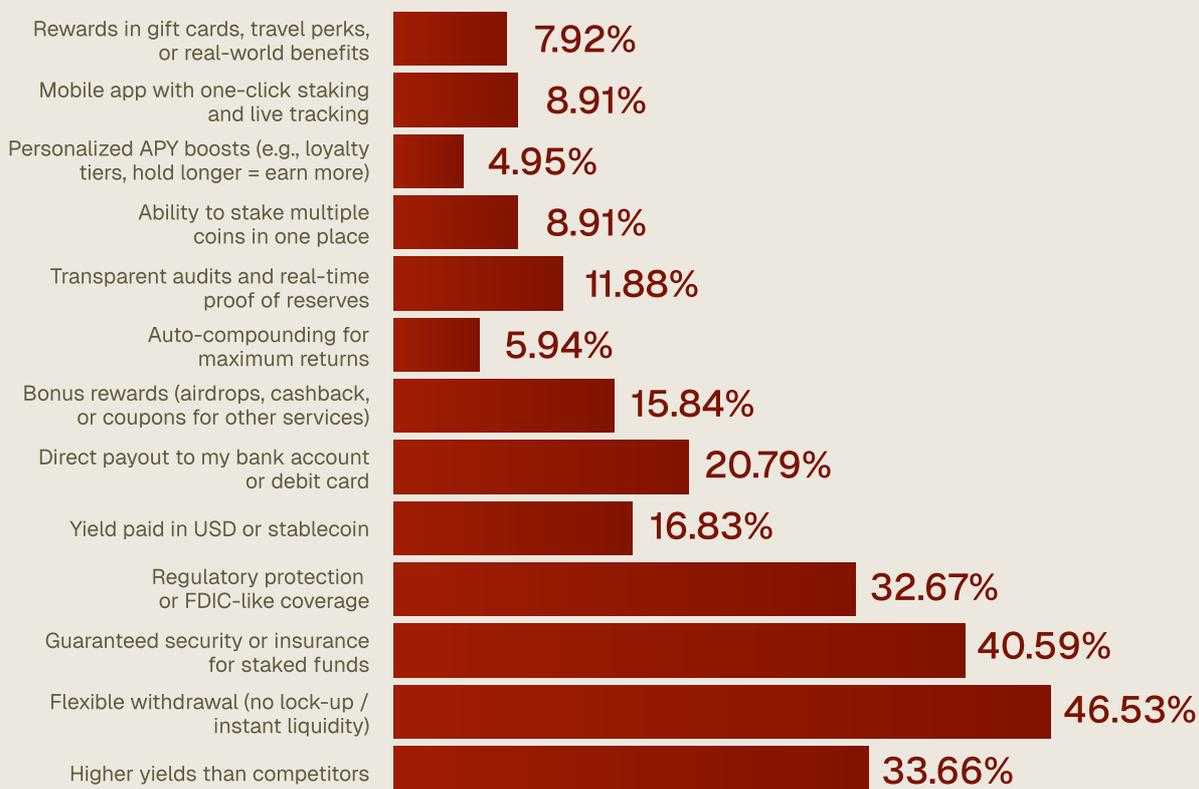
This priority stack explains why exchanges win today. They package liquidity and protection signals up front, so the yield

number feels additive rather than compensatory.

For marketers and product owners the right order is simple: prove users can withdraw anytime, prove their funds are protected, then present a compelling rate.

Extras like points, bonuses, and complex mechanics add little unless they sit on top of that foundation.

What feature would make a staking or earning crypto product irresistible for you?



Conclusion

Crypto yield in 2025 is defined by two parallel realities: a massive, centralized ecosystem where tens of millions of retail users earn yield through custodial platforms, and a much smaller decentralized ecosystem serving a niche of crypto-native participants.

Retail investors remain cautious. They keep assets liquid, only chase yield when it significantly outpaces traditional finance, and prioritize safety over returns.

The majority won't move funds for single-digit APYs; 6% or higher is the threshold at which yield starts to become compelling.

Trust and access remain the critical barriers. Retail users hesitate not because they dislike returns, but because they doubt whether their assets will remain safe and accessible.

Concerns over bankruptcies, hacks, lock-ups, and lack of clarity continue to limit participation. To scale adoption, yield products must prioritize liquidity, transparency, and simplicity.

Language also plays an essential role. Terms like “staking” and “yield farming” create distance for mainstream users, while plain expressions such as “earning interest on your crypto” resonate immediately. For mass adoption, yield needs to be framed in familiar, traditional financial terms.

Looking ahead, the most successful platforms will be those that provide user-friendly experiences, clear protections, and credible returns that feel worth the risk.

Retail adoption of crypto yield will expand not by pushing the highest numbers, but by earning trust through clarity, reliability, and accessibility.

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