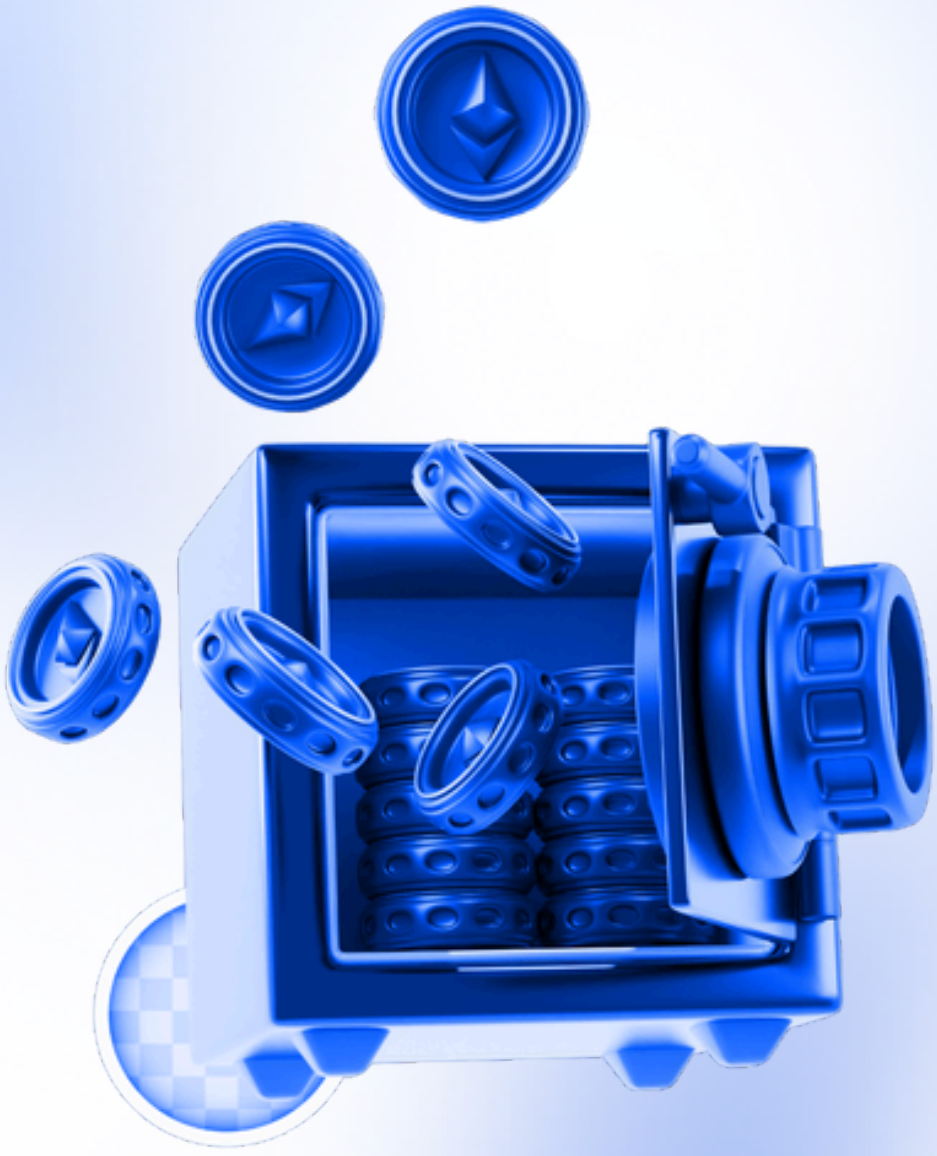
CRYPTO NEOBANKS: A TREND TO WATCH IN 2026



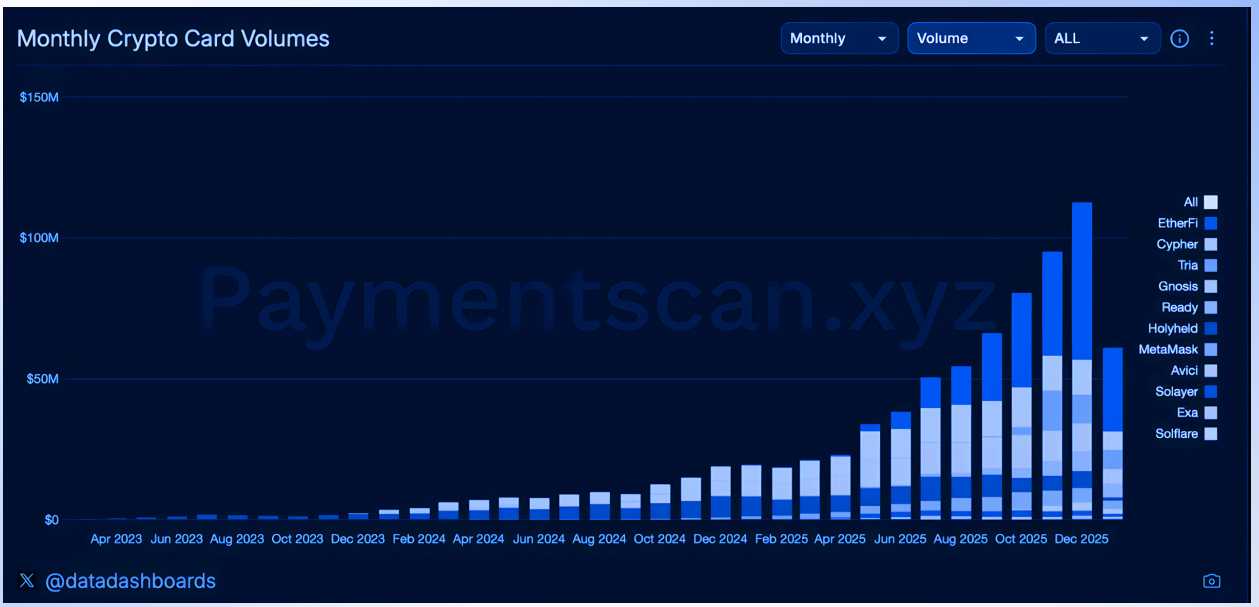
Cryptopolitan

A new wave of crypto-friendly neobanks is blurring the lines between traditional finance and blockchain. These digital banks serve as familiar front-ends, while stablecoins and blockchains operate as the back-end rails of transactions. This convergence, often termed Finance 2.0, is evident in rising crypto card usage, growing stablecoin payment volumes and supportive regulations that legitimize on-chain value transfer.

Neobanks Meet Crypto: Digital banks (neobanks) are increasingly integrating crypto features – from stablecoin wallets to crypto reward cards, blurring the line between a fintech app and a crypto platform. The user experience remains as easy as any banking app, but behind the scenes money moves on blockchains.

Stablecoins as New Payment Rails: Fiat-backed stablecoins like USDC and USDT now act as “digital dollar” rails, enabling near-instant, 24/7 transfers across borders. Monthly stablecoin transaction volumes have exploded, exceeding $450 billion per month in 2024 (about half of Visa’s throughput) and accelerating to over $853 billion as early 2026.

Crypto Card Usage Soars: Consumers are spending crypto via regular Visa/Mastercard networks in record amounts. Monthly spend volumes on crypto-linked cards jumped from $19.54 million in January 2025 to $112.6 million by December. That's 5.76x in just a single year.



*For a closer look at the platforms driving this growth, we recently published a detailed breakdown of the **top crypto cards** available today.*

Regulatory Tailwinds: Recent policies, like the U.S. GENIUS Act, provide a clear framework for banks to issue and use stablecoins. This regulatory clarity is accelerating crypto–neobank convergence, encouraging established financial players to embrace stablecoins as legitimate payment instruments.

Why This Matters Now: This Finance 2.0 trend opens opportunities in multiple areas, underlying blockchains that process stablecoin transactions (e.g. Ethereum or Solana, which see billions in stablecoin volume) and crypto-focused fintech platforms (for example, self-custodial neobanks like Avici on Solana or Ether.fi on Ethereum).

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NEOBANKS + STABLECOINS: BLURRING THE TRADFI-CRYPTO DIVIDE

Neobanks, mobile-first banks like Revolut, SoFi, or Nubank, made their name offering sleek, low-cost banking without brick-and-mortar branches. Now many are adding crypto to their product suite, effectively turning into "crypto neobanks." Instead of building wholly new infrastructure, these apps use stablecoins and blockchain networks as the payment rails beneath a familiar user interface. The result: from a customer's perspective, it feels like using a normal banking app, but value might be moving as USDC on Ethereum or USDT on Solana under the hood.

This trend represents a shift toward Finance 2.0, where front-end UX remains traditional while the back-end is decentralized**.** For example**,** h**ybrid neobank platforms today often let users hold both fiat and crypto in one app, and spend via a single card. hybrid neobanks** (**e.g. Revolut, Wirex, Xapo, Avici, etc.)** commonly offer multi-currency accounts, stablecoin wallets, crypto swaps, and even staking, alongside regular fiat services. In essence, your neobank may give you a checking account and a crypto wallet in one, with a debit card that draws from either balance.

Why Are Neobanks Doing This Now?

The answer to this boils down to user demand and competitive edge. **Crypto adoption has grown, and customers increasingly expect access to digital assets.** In some regions, stablecoins are a lifeline: I**n inflation-hit economies like Argentina (with >100% inflation), small businesses and freelancers now invoice and pay wages in stablecoins** to preserve value. In parts of Latin America, stablecoins account for nearly 30% of remittances on certain corridors, a testament to their utility in cross-border payments. Neobanks see these trends and are racing to integrate stablecoins, both to serve users and to differentiate themselves.

Fintechs and neobanks are embracing stablecoins to expand financial inclusion, enable cheaper remittances, and offer on-chain yields, indicating a shift from niche crypto offerings to core financial services

STABLECOINS AS A SETTLEMENT LAYER

At the heart of crypto neobanks are stablecoins, cryptocurrencies pegged to fiat (usually the U.S. dollar) that maintain stable value. They have quietly become the "digital plumbing" of global finance, especially for cross-border flows. Stablecoin usage has exploded in recent years, underscoring why neobanks are utilizing them:

Transaction Volume: By Q4 2024, on-chain stablecoin payment volumes had already reached roughly 53% of Visa's payment volume, with stablecoins processing **$1.87 trillion compared to Visa's $3.52 trillion over the same period.**

*Source: Top: Visa payment volumes sourced from **YCharts**. Bottom: Stablecoin transaction volumes sourced from **Visa Onchain Analytics** (adjusted volumes)*

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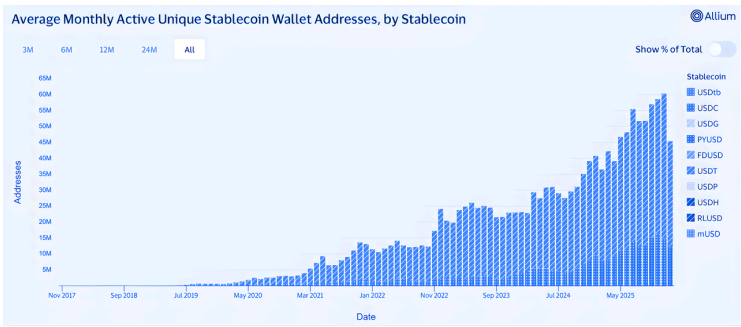
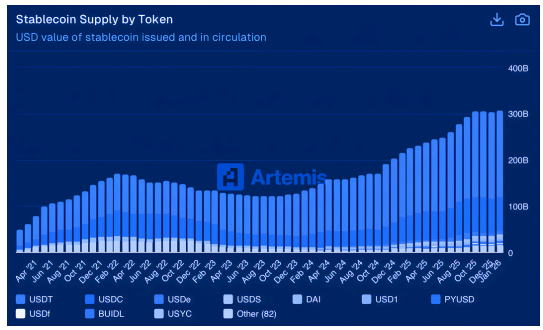
Rather than plateauing, this momentum only accelerated, with stablecoin transaction volumes nearly doubling year-over-year, rising 96% to $3.67 trillion by Q4 2025, **highlighting how quickly on-chain payments are closing the gap with traditional global payment rails.**

Circulation and Users: The supply of stablecoins in circulation topped $300 billion, more than double the level two years prior. What's more, the user base is broadening, **the number of average monthly active unique stablecoin addresses reached 60.33 million in December, up 54% year-over-year.** Each address isn't necessarily an individual, but the growth hints at millions of new users holding or transacting in stablecoins globally.





Source. Left: ***Visaonchainanalytics****. Right:* ***Artemis***

Use Cases: Stablecoins shine where traditional banking falters. They settle in minutes (or seconds) anytime, anywhere. Remittances and cross-border business payments are prime examples. Because stablecoins run on the internet of blockchains, intermediaries (and their fees) are cut out, and forex conversion can be bypassed if sender and receiver both use a USD-pegged token. Stablecoins effectively turn money into a borderless, always-on form, which is why emerging markets have eagerly adopted them.

Merchant Payments: While true merchant acceptance of crypto is still limited, stablecoins are increasingly finding their way into everyday commerce through intermediaries such as cards, wallets, and payment processors. Businesses are discovering that accepting stablecoins for large or cross-border payments can significantly reduce settlement times and transaction costs.

For example, companies like S**cale AI pay international contractors in stablecoins to bypass slow and expensive bank wires.**

This same dynamic is playing out at a larger, global scale: SpaceX uses stablecoins to collect payments from Starlink customers in countries with underdeveloped financial systems, converting local payments into stablecoins to mitigate FX risk and streamline cross-border transactions. Together, these use cases highlight how 24/7, instant settlement for payroll, supplier payments, and international commerce could become a genuine game-changer for businesses operating across borders.

REGULATIONS PAVING THE WAY

It's worth noting that regulatory clarity is arriving for stablecoins, further accelerating adoption. **In July 2025, the United States enacted the Guiding and Establishing National Innovation for U.S. Stablecoins (GENIUS) Act, establishing the country's first federal framework for payment stablecoin issuance.** The legislation restricts issuance to regulated entities only, allowing banks and credit unions to issue stablecoins under existing supervisory regimes, while permitting non-bank issuers to operate under licensing and oversight from the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC).

Public Law 119–27
119th Congress

An Act

To provide for the regulation of payment stablecoins, and for other purposes.

July 18, 2025
[S. 1582]

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

Guiding and Establishing National Innovation for U.S. Stablecoins Act.
12 USC 5901 note.

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Guiding and Establishing National Innovation for U.S. Stablecoins Act" or the "GENIUS Act".

12 USC 5901.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) APPROPRIATE FEDERAL BANKING AGENCY.—The term "appropriate Federal banking agency" has the meaning given that term in section 3 of the Federal Deposit Insurance Act (12 U.S.C. 1813).

(2) BANK SECRECY ACT.—The term "Bank Secrecy Act" means—

(A) section 21 of the Federal Deposit Insurance Act (12 U.S.C. 1829b);

(B) chapter 2 of title I of Public Law 91–508 (12 U.S.C. 1951 et seq.); and

(C) subchapter II of chapter 53 of title 31, United States Code.

(3) BOARD.—The term "Board" means the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System.

(4) COMPTROLLER.—The term "Comptroller" means the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency.

(5) CORPORATION.—The term "Corporation" means the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation.

(6) DIGITAL ASSET.—The term "digital asset" means any digital representation of value that is recorded on a cryptographically secured distributed ledger.

(7) DIGITAL ASSET SERVICE PROVIDER.—The term "digital asset service provider"—

(A) means a person that, for compensation or profit, engages in the business in the United States (including on behalf of customers or users in the United States) of—

(i) exchanging digital assets for monetary value;

(ii) exchanging digital assets for other digital assets;

(iii) transferring digital assets to a third party;

(iv) acting as a digital asset custodian; or

(v) participating in financial services relating to digital asset issuance; and

Source: Congress.gov

Crucially, **the law explicitly states that properly issued payment stablecoins are not securities or commodities, removing uncertainty about SEC/CFTC crackdowns**. It also imposes strict reserve requirements (1:1 backing with high-quality assets) and **gives stablecoin holders priority in issuer insolvencies, making stablecoins safer and more bank-like.**

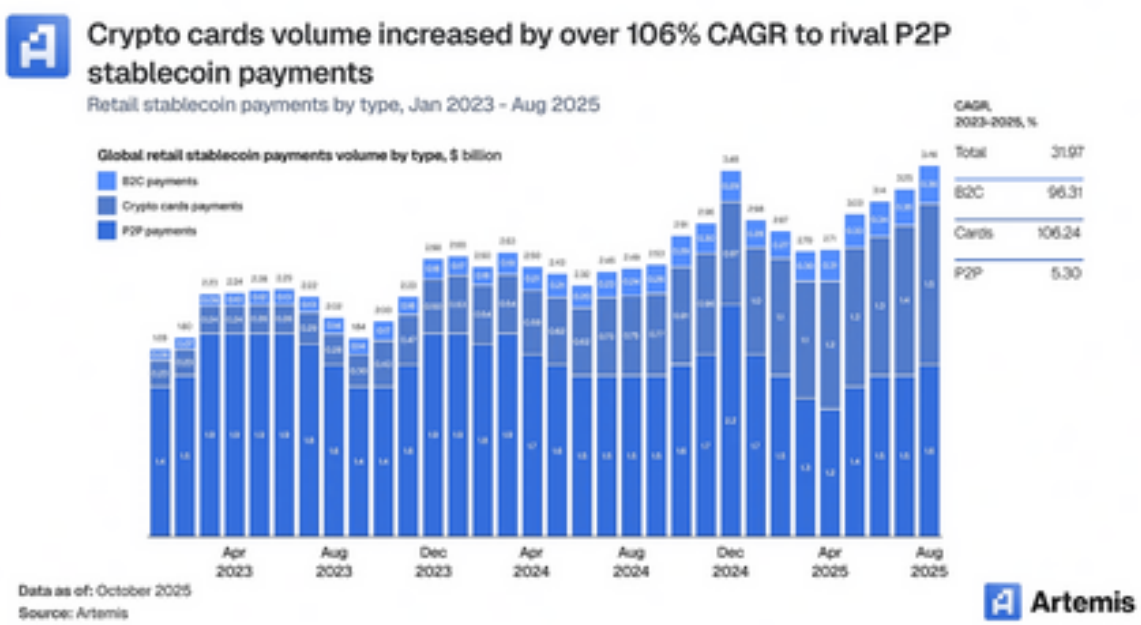
The GENIUS Act signaled to traditional institutions that stablecoins are here to stay, and here are the rules. **Shortly after, some U.S. banks (e.g. Citi, Goldman Sachs) began exploring launching their own stablecoins or tokenized deposits.**

In Europe, regulations like MiCA are likewise introducing stablecoin oversight. This legitimization through regulationmeans neobanks can integrate stablecoins with confidence that the legal ground is solid, a key reason why now is a good time to cover this trend. **Legislative moves like the GENIUS Act are prompting fintechs to fold stablecoins into their services to enhance inclusion and cross-border capabilities.**

CRYPTO CARDS: BRIDGING DIGITAL ASSETS TO DAILY SPENDING

One of the clearest indicators of this neobank-crypto convergence is the explosive growth of crypto-linked payment cards. **These are Visa or Mastercard debit cards that draw from a crypto balance** (often a stablecoin) instead of a regular bank account. For the user, it works like any other debit card, swipe or tap to pay, the purchase is settled in fiat to the merchant. But on the backend, the system instantly converts your crypto to fiat, or even settles via stablecoin behind the scenes. **This innovation has effectively brought crypto into everyday commerce without requiring merchants to directly accept crypto.**

The data is striking. **Monthly spending via crypto cards has grown 15-fold in under three years, from roughly $100 million in early 2023 to about $1.5 billion by late 2025.** That's an annualized $18 billion in card payments funded by crypto, a level on par with all peer-to-peer on-chain stablecoin transfers (~$19 billion annual). In other words, spending at shops and online using crypto cards now rivals the volume of people simply sending stablecoins to each other on-chain. **This increase in crypto card usage, over 100% year-on-year growth in 2025, is a concrete sign that more consumers are comfortably using crypto (especially stablecoins) for routine spending.**



WHY THE SUDDEN TAKEOFF IN 2025?

Visa's Push: Visa has been very proactive in partnering with crypto platforms. It now supports 130+ crypto card programs (as does Mastercard) but has captured over 90% of the volume. By aligning early with crypto-native fintech issuers (like Rain in the Middle East and Reap in Asia), Visa ensured that when those startups' user bases spend stablecoins, it happens over Visa's network.

By Q4 2025, **Visa's on-chain stablecoin settlements reached a ~$3.5 billion annual run rate (growing 460% YoY). While that was still under 20% of total crypto card volume,** it shows Visa actively moving from just converting crypto-to-fiat to actually using stablecoins for part of the settlement pipeline. **Mastercard, somewhat later to the game, has been rolling out its own stablecoin initiatives and crypto partnerships, but trails in volume.**

Geographic Demand: Crypto cards took off especially in regions where stablecoins solve real problems. Emerging markets with currency instability saw heavy adoption. For example, **Argentina, dealing with hyperinflation, has been a hotbed for stablecoin debit cards as a daily inflation hedge. One analysis noted Argentina's crypto card users heavily favor USDC for stability. India is another case, while domestic payments are modern (India's UPI system makes debit cards less novel), there's interest in crypto-backed credit cards for accessing dollar-based credit lines.**

In contrast, in developed markets like the U.S. or EU, **crypto cards aren't solving an obvious pain point, but they attract a segment of users who want to spend their crypto holdings or get crypto rewards.**

In short, the value prop of crypto neobanks differs by market: in some countries it's about survival (protecting value, accessing USD, or receiving remittances cheaply), **while in others it's about convenience and choice (diversifying how you hold money, earning rewards, or just the tech novelty).**

What This Means for Users and Adoption

For consumers and businesses, **the rise of crypto neobanks and stablecoin rails is quietly reshaping how money is used and moved.**

More choice and inclusion: Users can now hold and transact across fiat and crypto in a single app, unlocking access to dollar-denominated value for people in unstable or underbanked economies. For example, **freelancers in countries like Argentina or Nigeria can receive earnings in USDC, avoid local currency devaluation, and spend globally via cards, capabilities that were previously expensive or inaccessible.** In this sense, stablecoins are emerging as a practical on-ramp to the U.S. dollar for millions.

Utility over labels: As crypto infrastructure is embedded into familiar fintech experiences, users increasingly care less about whether their funds sit in a bank account or on-chain and more about speed, yield, and convenience. Instant transfers, **on-chain yields, and seamless cross-border payments can drive adoption** without users explicitly "using crypto," accelerating mainstream uptake by stealth.

Always-on payments: Near-instant, 24/7 settlement is resetting expectations. Waiting days for international wires or T+2 settlement may soon feel outdated as **stablecoin rails enable real-time payments beyond banking hours,** pressuring traditional systems to adapt.

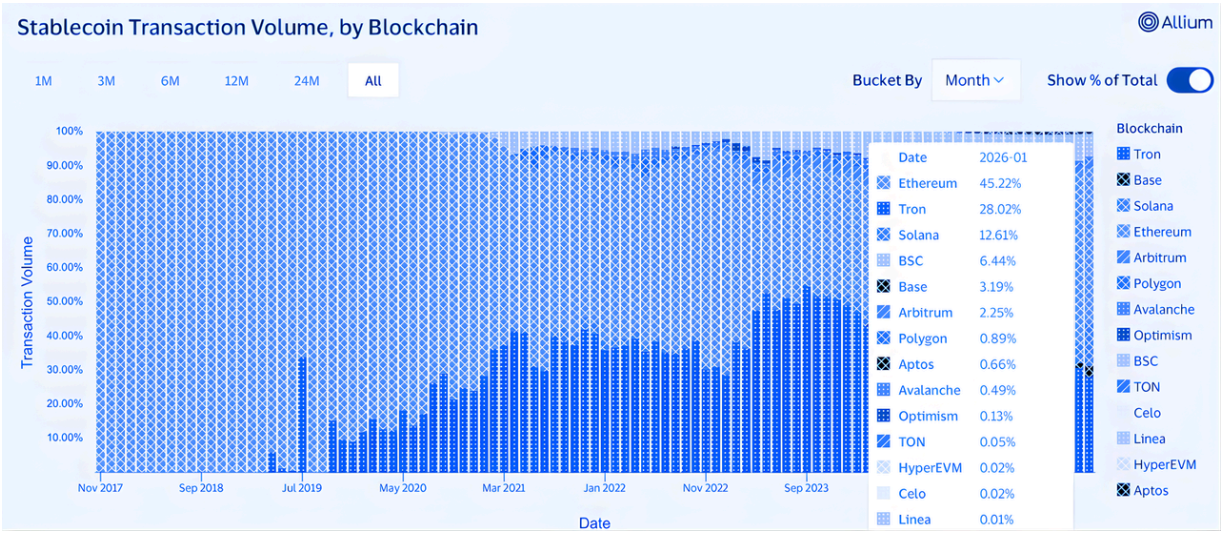
Global finance by default: Holding a universal digital dollar reduces the importance of geography. Stablecoins already allow individuals and small businesses to transact globally with minimal friction, **supporting cross-border work, gig economies, and international commerce at scale.**

Having said that, challenges remain, from custody risks to regulatory oversight. Nonetheless, momentum is clear. In 2026, the boundary between traditional banking and crypto infrastructure is set to blur even further.

WHERE VALUE IS ACCRUING IN FINANCE 2.0?

From a market participant standpoint, the rise of crypto neobanks presents multiple angles of opportunity:

The Rails (Blockchains & Stablecoin Infrastructure): The boom in stablecoin payments naturally benefits the underlying blockchains that process these transactions. For instance, **Ethereum has historically settled the bulk of stablecoin value (USDC, USDT, DAI all largely run on Ethereum or its layer-2 networks),** which in turn can drive demand for Ether (for gas fees) and increase usage of Ethereum-based services.



Competing networks like Solana, Tron, and others have also carved out niches (Tron, for example, carries a huge share of Tether transactions). If one believes stablecoin volumes will keep growing, then blockchain platforms supporting those volumes stand to gain network fees and activity.

Front-End Platforms (Neobanks & Crypto-Fintech Startups): On the other side are the consumer-facing platforms bringing crypto finance to users. These include both fintech companies integrating crypto (some of which are publicly traded or venture-backed) and crypto-native startups building bank-like services (often issuing their own tokens). **Avici.money is one such example, a Solana-based self-custodial neobank that offers a Visa card linked to a smart wallet. Another example is Ether.fi, which started as a decentralized staking service but is part of a broader Web3 banking trend.**

CONCLUSION

The convergence of neobanks and crypto, anchored by stablecoins as the connective layer, offers one of the clearest glimpses of Finance 2.0 in motion. Much like how smartphones abstracted the complexity of the internet, crypto infrastructure is increasingly being hidden behind familiar financial interfaces. Today, users can hold dollar-denominated stablecoins, earn yield, move money globally in seconds, and spend via cards, all without ever touching a private key or understanding blockchain mechanics.

In 2026, this trend is worth close attention because multiple forces are aligning at once. Accelerating real-world usage, growing institutional and fintech participation, and emerging regulatory clarity around stablecoins. Rather than replacing traditional finance outright, crypto neobanks are evolving alongside it, embedding on-chain rails into compliant, user-friendly products.