



Research Report | 04.12.2025

Digital assets in mainstream portfolios: current state and trends for 2026

2025 was a year of transition. The integration of digital assets into traditional financial structures accelerated significantly, while market dislocations triggered a sharp revaluation of multiple segments. This makes it all the more important to understand the fundamental drivers now shaping the outlook for 2026.

Price action revealed an unusual dynamic. Bitcoin reached a new all-time high of 126,000 dollars in October before a broad correction set in, which has continued into early December and weighed heavily on large parts of the market. Many altcoins declined substantially, shaping the overall picture of recent months. To assess this dynamic, it is worthwhile to review the fundamental developments that have influenced the market and are now defining the outlook for 2026.

Achieved milestones and their impact

2025 was a year of pronounced institutionalization and growing mainstream adoption, coupled with the recognition that maturation processes rarely proceed smoothly. The overall market surpassed four trillion dollars for the first time in August, extending the uptrend that began at the macro bottom in December 2022 at roughly 750 billion. Regulatory progress was particularly decisive, materially reshaping market conditions and, for the first time, establishing clear parameters for integration into the traditional financial system.

The regulatory shift in the United States represented a genuine quantum leap for the crypto industry. With the GENIUS Act, the CLARITY Act and Executive Order 14178, the United States moved within a few months from years of uncertainty and regulation by enforcement to a transparent, innovation-friendly framework. Stablecoins received

federal legitimacy for the first time, digital assets obtained clearly defined oversight responsibilities, and the phase of administrative obstacles officially ended. As a result, one of the previously most restrictive markets has become one of the most attractive destinations for institutional capital and blockchain innovation.

The effects became visible immediately. Banks and payment providers increasingly integrated digital assets into their existing infrastructures. Bitcoin ETFs recorded strong inflows supported by a broadening institutional investor base. In parallel, the already established Strategic Bitcoin Reserve has served as a signal that Bitcoin is increasingly viewed as a strategic asset and anchored at a national level.

In addition, the SEC approved new ETF standards for broader altcoin exposure, thereby further easing market access. The concrete effects of these approvals, however, will only become visible in 2026.

The driving force: Bitcoin

Before turning to other blockchain sectors and their prospects, it is worth taking a closer look at the cryptocurrency that continues to dominate by market capitalization. Bitcoin experienced another wave of institutional adoption, visible in three key areas.

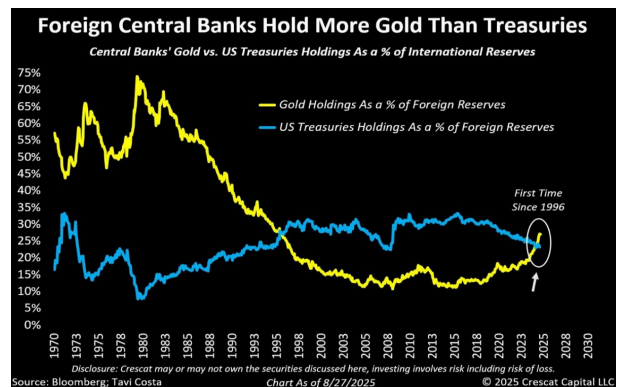


First, US Bitcoin ETFs attracted a historically high inflow of capital. Approximately 27 billion dollars were added, bringing the total held in exchange-traded products to roughly 142 billion. Demand came predominantly from institutional investors, embedding Bitcoin more deeply in traditional portfolio management.

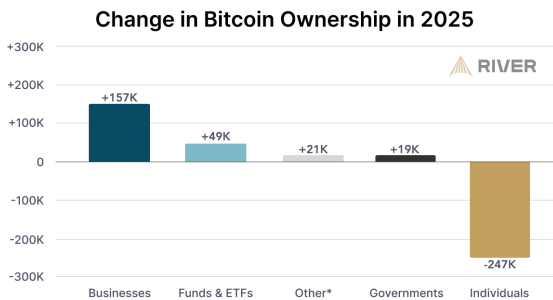
Second, activity by Treasury companies intensified; these are listed corporations holding Bitcoin as a strategic component of their liquid reserves. According to estimates by Bitcointreasuries.net, such DAT corporations acquired additional holdings of more than 20 billion dollars this year.

Third, sovereign actors gained prominence. Abu Dhabi's sovereign wealth fund expanded its position, and the Czech National Bank included Bitcoin in its balance sheet for the first time on a trial basis.

increasingly evident. A renewed expansion of the money supply is expected, with the tightening cycle in the United States nearing its end and several major economies signalling monetary easing. The growing willingness to cut interest rates also indicates that overall monetary conditions in 2026 are likely to be more expansionary.



Rebalancing of international central bank reserves / Source: Bloomberg



Sources: River, BitcoinTreasuries, WuBlockchain
*Includes change in bitcoin to be mined, BTC held smart contracts, and estimated bitcoin lost

Structural change in the Bitcoin market / Source: River

The broader picture reveals a clear structural shift. An increasing number of institutional participants are acquiring holdings from long-term owners who, after years of accumulation, are selectively realizing profits. This rotation has a stabilizing effect and highlights Bitcoin's growing role as a strategic investment asset.

A new monetary order: where does Bitcoin stand?

Looking at the macroeconomic environment, it is difficult to exclude Bitcoin from the equation, even if recent volatility has occasionally obscured its relevance. The so-called debasement trade - the flight into scarce real assets amid expected depreciation of fiat currencies - is likely to play a central role in 2026, as structural changes in the global currency and monetary architecture become

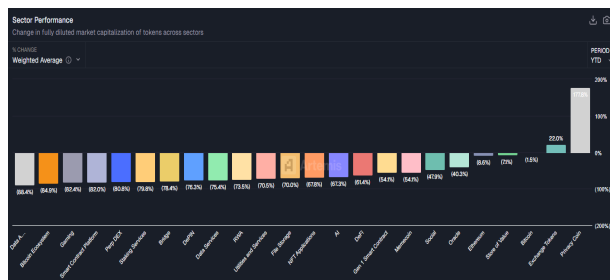
In parallel, BRICS countries in particular are intensifying efforts to become less dependent on Western-dominated payment systems and reserve currencies. Notable are the sharply rising gold purchases by their central banks, pointing to broader diversification of sovereign reserves and underscoring the global trend toward scarce stores of value that are less vulnerable to political interference. Bitcoin responds particularly sensitively to monetary-driven inflation impulses due to its programmatic scarcity.

Gold, silver and other commodities have also been rediscovered in this environment. Even Jerome Powell, Chair of the Federal Reserve, recently stated openly that while Bitcoin is often traded like a tech stock, its function is that of digital gold. In addition, Bitcoin, like physical gold, is censorship-resistant and carries no counterparty risk - features that have attracted renewed attention in the geopolitical context since the freezing of sovereign reserves.

In this environment, it would be an oversight to disregard Bitcoin's role in the macroeconomic setting. A resilient buyer base and anticipated monetary conditions argue for a constructive environment in the new year.

Altcoins, the underperformers of 2025

Although continued Bitcoin strength in 2026 should in principle provide tailwinds for altcoins, the weak performance of many segments this year remains a central issue. The main drivers were continued excess token supply through issuances, unlocks and high inflation rates. The market clearly demonstrated that a shake-out is underway and that valuations are aligning more closely with real usage. Excessive activity-to-valuation ratios such as users to market capitalization or transactions to market capitalization proved unsustainable. Projects without measurable utility were repriced and, in part, sharply penalized.

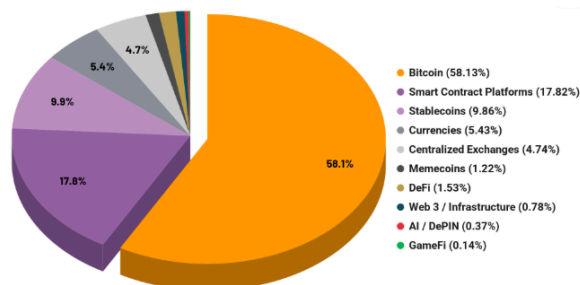


YTD sector performance / Source: Artemis

A sectoral view reveals a clear pattern. Except for privacy coins, which benefited from renewed attention amid rising global scrutiny of digital value transfers and CBDC discussions, only centralized-exchange tokens appreciated, led by BNB. Many previously hyped areas such as gaming declined significantly, as they lacked both practical utility and effective implementation despite high expectations. We expect this trend to continue, as numerous chains and applications remain in the market that are hardly used or not used at all.

The market already reflects this revaluation. Infrastructure projects with real-world usage and robust metrics continue to gain importance, while smaller segments and tokens are losing relevance. A look at total market capitalization confirms this picture. Leading smart contract platforms and Bitcoin account for the majority of capitalization, indicating increasingly efficient market allocation. From our perspective, broad diversification across the most important sectors and their relative market capitalization remains the most effective approach

to participating in the structural growth of the blockchain ecosystem.



Sectoral market structure by market capitalization / Source: Digital Asset Solutions AG

Looking ahead to 2026: structures, trends, opportunities

As mentioned at the outset, the global macro environment combined with increasing institutional participation is likely to support the market overall. Digital assets continue to gain recognition, and Bitcoin benefits from a broader buyer base that now includes sovereign actors.

The technological advantage is evident. Blockchain infrastructure is faster, cheaper, more transparent and universally accessible, consistent with the ongoing digitalization of capital markets. With recent regulatory progress, these developments now have an institutional foundation for large-scale adoption.

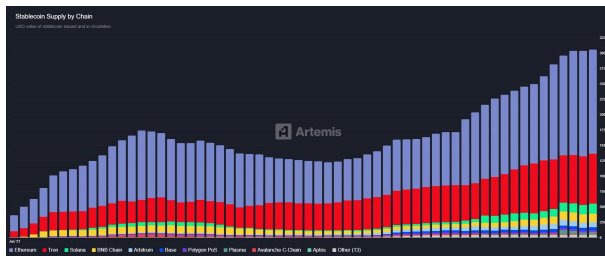
For the broader market, we expect particular growth in applications that benefit from clear regulatory frameworks. Above all, this includes leading smart-contract infrastructures with critical user bases and high throughput. Segments directly supported by the growth of stablecoins and ongoing tokenization will likewise benefit. Even today, in addition to US Treasuries, major US equities including futures are tradable around the clock through blockchain infrastructure – a trend likely to strengthen as market demand increases.

Within the application layer, we see advantages above all for DeFi-adjacent protocols and infrastructure layers that connect blockchain, traditional financial systems and other sectors. The stablecoin market now comprises more than 300



billion dollars in outstanding units and has reached transaction volumes that already exceed those of leading credit card networks. The entry of additional key participants and global demand for efficient dollar-transaction infrastructure will further accelerate adoption and scale the involved blockchains and application layers.

All of these developments reinforce our positive outlook for 2026.



Stablecoin supply by blockchain / Source: Artemis

Estimates expect volumes of several trillion dollars by 2030. Tokenized assets, particularly in the securities segment, are also likely to benefit from the GENIUS Act, which provides the regulatory basis for digital issuance and transfer of such instruments.

From niche to mainstream

The digital world is already optimized for continuous operation, low cost and immediate settlement. The question is not whether blockchain infrastructure will prevail in these areas, but when the full transition will occur.

Crypto is no longer a niche topic. Digital assets are increasingly integrated into portfolios and payment systems and now represent a distinct segment of global capital markets. The ETF landscape is established, banks are expanding custody and trading capabilities, and institutional allocations continue to rise.

In parallel, substantial funds are flowing into infrastructure and service providers, evident for example in NYSE's engagement in Polymarket or in substantial investments by Citadel Securities in Kraken and Ripple. Convergence between traditional and blockchain-based settlement infrastructures is advancing noticeably.