The Digital Asset Gap: What Non-Adoption Is Costing Financial Services

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The short version

Most client crypto is already held outside the advisory relationship, and other firms are earning the fees on it. Clients ask, most advisors cannot or do not act, and the assets and trades go elsewhere.

Measure	Figure	Source
Advisors asked about crypto by clients, 2025	94%	Bitwise/VettaFi 2026 survey
Advisors who allocated to crypto in client accounts, 2025	32%	Bitwise/VettaFi 2026 survey
Advisors who say some or all of their clients invest in crypto on their own, 2025	74%	Bitwise/VettaFi 2026 survey
Affluent investors aged 18–40 who moved money away from an adviser without crypto access	35%	Zerohash report
Advisors who say digital asset education is insufficient	84%	21shares/FUSE survey
Advisory fees not earned on each $100B held away, at an assumed 1% fee	about $1B a year	Calculation, see Sizing the bleed
US household wealth passing to heirs through 2048	about $105 trillion	Cerulli projection

No published figure exists for total industry revenue lost. This sheet sizes the gap from its measurable parts and states its assumptions.

Where the money already sits

Clients did not wait for their advisors. In 2025, 74% of advisors said some or all of their clients were investing in crypto on their own, up from 71% a year earlier.

Pool	Size	As of	Note
Coinbase customer assets	$245.9B	June 30, 2026	Includes institutional custody
US spot bitcoin ETFs	$84.3B	September 2026	12 funds; 13F filers held only about 25% at mid-2025
Robinhood crypto trading volume	$40B in one quarter	Q2 2026	$18B on the app, $22B on Bitstamp
Global crypto market	$2.6 trillion	August 31, 2026	$1.6 trillion of it bitcoin
Dollar stablecoins	$298.5B	September 12, 2026	86% of all tokenized value
Tokenized assets excluding stablecoins	$47.6B	September 12, 2026	Includes $15B of tokenized US Treasuries

These pools overlap and should not be added together. Coinbase's figure, for example, includes custody for institutions.

Who is holding it:

- **Self-directed, not advised.** In the Zerohash survey of affluent investors aged 18–40, 61% hold crypto and 76% of holders manage it themselves.
- **Meaningful position sizes.** About 7 in 10 of those holders put 5% to 20% of their portfolio in crypto.
- **ETF buyers are mostly not advisors.** Institutions filing 13F reports held about 25% of bitcoin ETF assets at mid-2025, per Bloomberg data. Advisors were the largest group among those filers.
- **Brokerage platforms are the channel.** Schwab says its clients hold roughly 20% of all spot crypto ETP assets.

Sizing the bleed

Every $100B of client crypto held away is about $1B a year in advisory fees not earned. These are unit estimates, built on an assumed 1% annual advisory fee, because no industry-wide loss figure is published.

Unit	Assets involved	Revenue not earned per year at 1%
Each $100B held outside advisory accounts	$100B	$1B
One client who leaves, low end of the reported range	$250,000	$2,500
One client who leaves, high end of the reported range	$1,000,000	$10,000
A $1B firm whose clients hold 1% to 4% in crypto elsewhere	$10M to $40M	$100,000 to $400,000

The 1% to 4% band is the allocation range Bank of America now endorses for wealth clients. Morgan Stanley's committee suggests 2% to 4%.

The fee on the crypto sleeve is the small loss. The large one is the whole relationship:

- **Clients are leaving.** 35% of affluent investors aged 18–40 have moved money away from advisers who do not offer crypto.
- **The amounts are not small.** More than half of those who moved shifted between $250,000 and $1 million.
- **Top earners leave fastest.** Among respondents earning $500,000 or more, 51% have moved assets.
- **It is recoverable.** 64% would stay longer or bring more assets if their advisor offered crypto access.

Transaction revenue is leaking too. Robinhood booked $100 million of crypto transaction revenue in Q2 2026 alone, in a falling market. Schwab charges 75 basis points per trade on retail spot crypto.

Why it is happening

Three gaps explain it: advisors often cannot buy crypto for clients, most do not feel equipped to advise on it, and many firms have not acted on demand they can see.

Gap	Evidence	Source
Adoption and access	58% of advisors were unable to buy crypto in client accounts, or unsure whether they could	Bitwise/VettaFi via Financial Planning
Adoption and access	48% of advisors cite company restrictions as a roadblock	Bitwise/VettaFi via Financial Planning
Adoption and access	61% of European advisers work at firms that restrict digital assets or give no clear guidance	CoinShares 2026 survey
Understanding	84% of advisors say digital asset education is insufficient	21shares/FUSE survey
Understanding	68% of advisors rate their own knowledge intermediate or lower; 6.5% call themselves expert	Financial Planning survey, August 2025
Understanding	55% of wealthy investors call advisor digital asset knowledge extremely important	CoinShares investor study
Complacency	94% of advisors got client questions, yet 32% allocated	Bitwise/VettaFi 2026 survey
Complacency	Half of surveyed advisors do not use digital assets at all	21shares/FUSE survey

The usual reasons for waiting are weakening:

- **Product access.** The SEC approved generic listing standards in September 2025. Roughly 40 single-asset spot crypto ETPs now trade in the US.
- **Custody rules.** On October 1, 2026 the SEC proposed a custody framework for advisers holding client crypto. It is a proposal, not a final rule.

- **Peer cover.** The largest wealth platforms have already moved, as the next section shows.

Who is capturing the business instead

The assets are going to crypto-native platforms and to the incumbents that moved first. The gap is now between firms inside traditional finance, not only between traditional finance and crypto.

Firm	What it has done	When
Coinbase	Holds $245.9B of customer crypto and stablecoins	June 30, 2026
Robinhood	$100M crypto transaction revenue in one quarter; tokenized US stocks in 120+ countries; its own blockchain	Q2 2026
Fidelity	Bitcoin, ether, Litecoin and Solana custody and trading for wealth managers, inside its advisor workstation	Live
Charles Schwab	Retail spot bitcoin and ether trading; advisor spot trading and custody planned	Retail April 2026; advisors by mid-2027
Morgan Stanley	Opened crypto funds to all wealth clients, including retirement and trust accounts	October 2025
Bank of America	Lets Merrill and Private Bank advisers recommend 1% to 4%; ended a policy that kept 15,000+ advisers from recommending crypto	January 2026
Eaglebrook	Launched direct indexing for digital assets in separately managed	September 30, 2026

Firm	What it has done	When
	accounts	

Morgan Stanley framed its move as competition with digital-native brokerages such as Coinbase and Robinhood. A firm still waiting is now behind its own peer group.

The next wave

Two shifts will widen the gap: wealth is moving to the generations that own crypto, and tokenization is moving traditional assets onto the same rails.

Wealth transfer

- **Scale.** Cerulli projects $124 trillion of US household wealth will change hands through 2048, about $105 trillion of it to heirs.
- **Heirs switch providers.** 43% of younger heirs plan to leave their parents' financial provider even when satisfied with it, per a Harris Poll.
- **Heirs own crypto.** 58% of Gen Z and millennial investors already own digital assets.
- **The generational split is wide.** One 2026 survey found 30% of millennials own crypto versus 7% of baby boomers.

Tokenization

Measure	Figure	Source
Tokenized real-world assets, January 2025	$5.8B	RWA.xyz via Cointelegraph
Tokenized real-world assets, late April 2026	$30.2B	RWA.xyz via Cointelegraph
2030 forecast, conservative	about $2 trillion	McKinsey
2030 forecast, bullish (includes stablecoins and deposits)	$9.4 trillion	BCG and Ripple
Institutions very interested in tokenized assets	63%	EY-Parthenon and Coinbase survey

Tokenization is still small, so this is future exposure, not current lost revenue. Over 60% of institutions in the EY survey expect blockchain rails in trading, clearing and settlement within three to five years.

Exposure by segment

The loss takes a different form in each part of the industry, and it is largest where revenue depends on assets the firm can see.

Segment	How the loss shows up	Key figure
RIAs and financial advisors	Fees not earned on held-away assets; clients leaving for firms with access	74% of advisors say clients invest in crypto on their own; 35% of young affluent investors have moved money
Wealth managers and private banks	Heirs who do not stay after inheriting	$105 trillion passing to heirs; 43% of younger heirs plan to switch
Broker-dealers	Trading and custody revenue earned by exchanges and self-directed platforms	Robinhood: $100M crypto transaction revenue in Q2 2026
Family offices	Slowest moving, so the smallest near-term loss	24% invested, typically around 1%; 44% of those now treat it as strategic

Family offices are the weakest part of the case. UBS, surveying 307 offices, still calls crypto a niche allocation.

What the numbers do not show

The case is strongest for younger, affluent clients and weakest in a falling market. Anyone using this sheet should expect these objections.

- **The market is down.** Bitcoin stood about 38% below its October 2025 peak at the end of August. Coinbase customer assets fell 42% in a year, and Robinhood's crypto revenue fell 38%.
- **Ownership has dropped.** Gallup found US adult crypto ownership fell from 14% to 9% in a year. Pew puts lifetime use at about one in five.
- **Caution is not always complacency.** Advisors' top stated roadblocks are volatility (57%) and regulatory concerns (53%). Firms that stayed out spared clients this year's drawdown.

- **Many surveys have interested sponsors.** Zerohash, Bitwise, 21shares and CoinShares all sell crypto products or infrastructure. The Zerohash survey covered 500 investors aged 18 to 40 only.
- **The dollar estimates are illustrative.** They assume a 1% fee and that held-away assets would otherwise be advised. No source measures total industry revenue lost.
- **The pools overlap.** Exchange balances, ETF assets and market totals count some of the same assets.
- **Older and institutional clients are less exposed.** Baby boomers and family offices hold little crypto today.

This sheet is market information, not investment, legal or compliance advice.

Sources

Figures are as reported by each source on the date shown in the text. Several are news reports of a survey or filing, not the original document.

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