Payments System Research Briefing

# U.S. Consumers' Use of Cryptocurrency for Payments

*By Fumiko Hayashi and Aditi Routh*

*Some policymakers and payments industry participants expect consumers to make payments using stablecoins—a type of cryptocurrency intended to maintain a stable value relative to some other asset. However, the share of U.S. consumers who use cryptocurrency for payments has been very small and recently declined slightly. The most cited reason for paying with cryptocurrency is that the recipient preferred it, suggesting many users passively choose cryptocurrency for payments.*

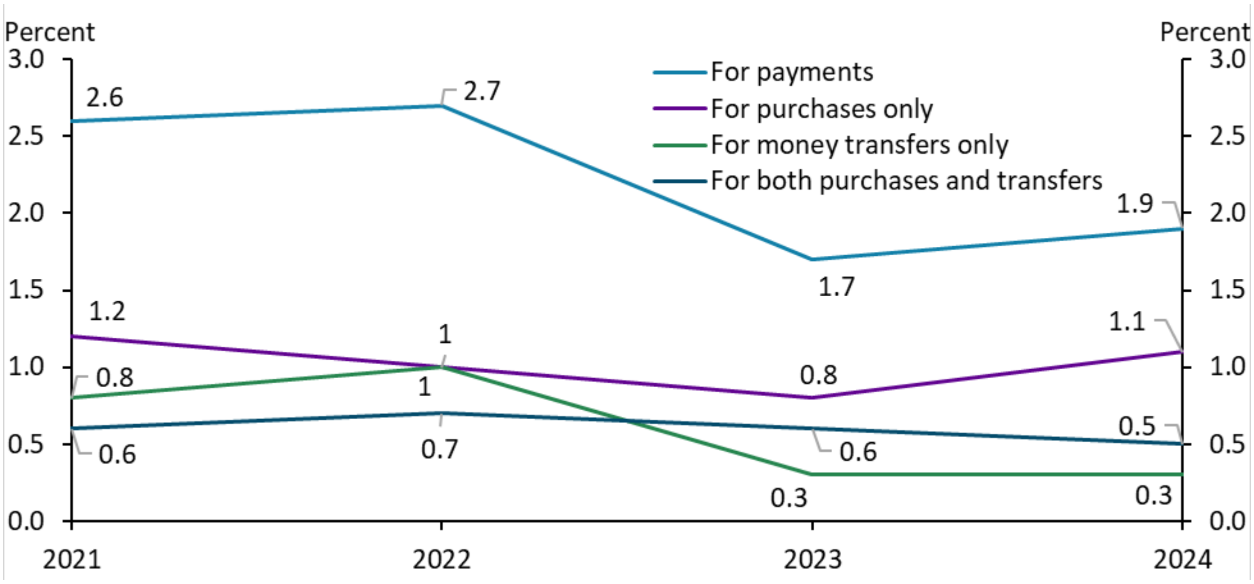
Congress recently passed legislation (the GENIUS Act) establishing a framework for the issuance of stablecoins, which could increase the use of stablecoins for payments. Stablecoins are a type of cryptocurrency intended to maintain a stable value relative to some other asset, such as the U.S. dollar or Treasuries, so stablecoins may be more suited as a payment method than other cryptocurrencies whose value fluctuates significantly (such as Bitcoin). Although most consumers who currently own cryptocurrency do so as an investment, stablecoins and other cryptocurrencies have been available for consumers to make payments since the mid-2010s. In this *Payments System Research Briefing,* we examine the share and types of U.S. consumers who have used cryptocurrency for payments in the past few years and the reasons for their use.

**Share of U.S. consumers who use cryptocurrency for payments**

We examine U.S. consumers' use of cryptocurrency for payments based on data from the Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking (SHED) conducted by the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. This annual consumer survey contains questions about cryptocurrency ownership and purposes of ownership since 2021 (Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System 2025). The survey asks whether consumers own cryptocurrency "as an investment," whether they used cryptocurrency "to buy something or make a payment" (purchases), and whether they used cryptocurrency "to send money to friends or family" (money transfers).

The share of U.S. consumers who report using cryptocurrency for payments—purchases, money transfers, or both—has been very small and has declined slightly in recent years.[1] The light blue line in Chart 1 shows that this share declined from nearly 3 percent in 2021 and 2022 to less than 2 percent in 2023 and 2024.[2] U.S. consumers who use cryptocurrency for payments can be divided into three mutually exclusive groups (irrespective of their cryptocurrency ownership for investment): (1) those who use cryptocurrency only for purchases; (2) those who use it only for transferring money to friends or family; and (3) those who use it for both purchases and money transfers. The decline in the share of U.S. consumers who use cryptocurrency for payments is mainly driven by a decline in the share of U.S. consumers who use cryptocurrency only for transferring money to friends or family. The green line in Chart 1 shows that this share declined by more than half, from 0.8 percent in 2021 to 0.3 percent in 2024.[3] In contrast, the shares of U.S. consumers who use cryptocurrency only for purchases (purple line) and those who use cryptocurrency for both purchases and money transfers (dark blue line) barely declined from 2021 to 2024.

**Chart 1: The share of U.S. consumers who use cryptocurrency for payments has declined slightly**




Sources: Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System and authors' calculations.

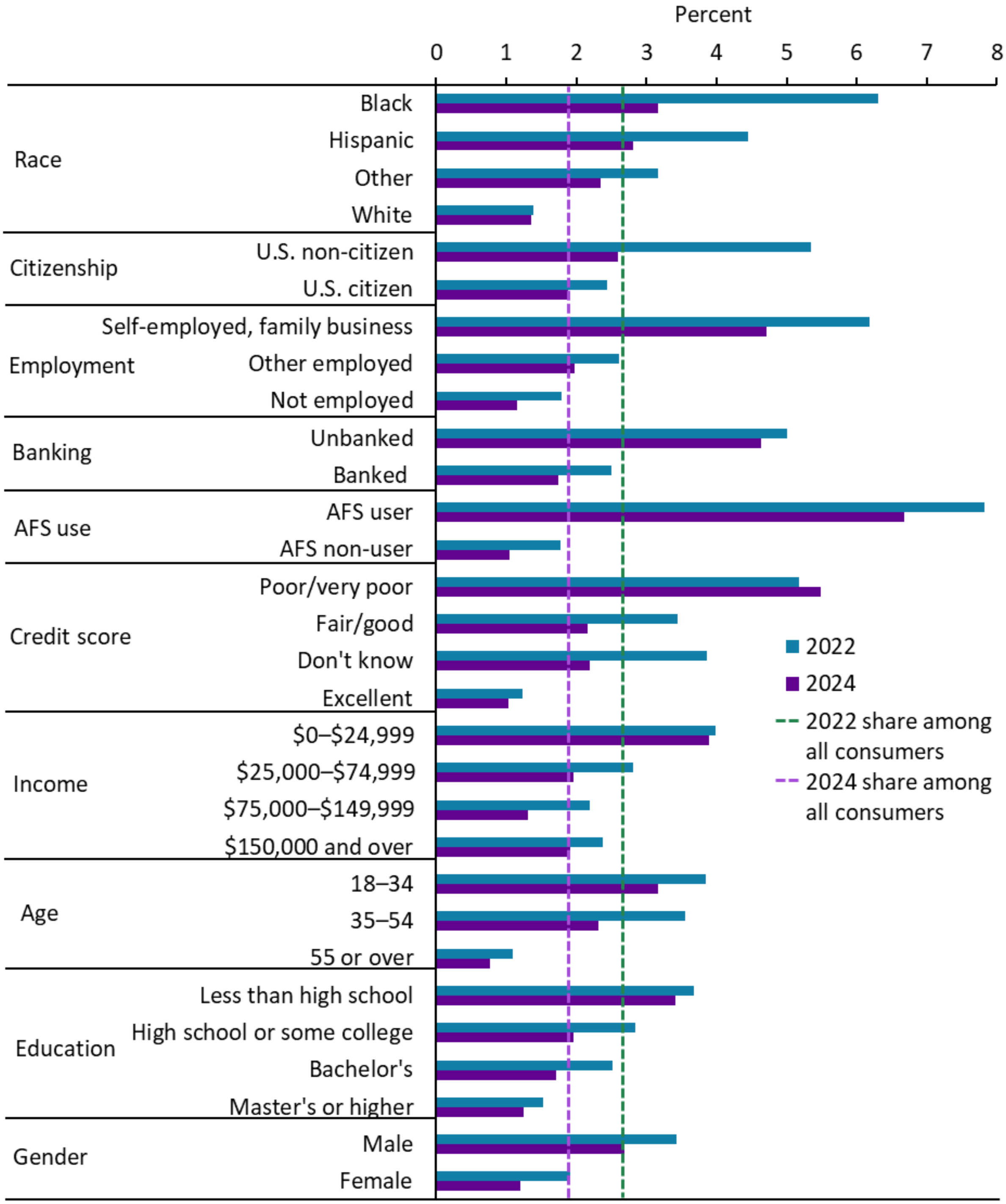
**Types of consumers who are more likely to use cryptocurrency for payments**

Consumers with certain characteristics may be more likely to use cryptocurrency for payments than other consumers.[4] In addition, while the share of consumers who pay with cryptocurrency has declined overall, it may have increased for subsets of consumers with certain characteristics. Chart 2 shows the shares of consumers who pay with cryptocurrency by demographic or financial characteristic in 2022 (light blue bars) and 2024 (purple bars). Green and light purple dashed lines, respectively, indicate the shares of consumers who pay with cryptocurrency among all consumers in 2022 and 2024.

Racial or ethnic minority consumers, especially Black (non-Hispanic) and Hispanic consumers, were more likely to use cryptocurrency for payments than white (non-Hispanic) consumers in both 2022 and 2024, though the shares of consumers who pay with cryptocurrency declined across all three groups. In 2022, the share of consumers who pay with cryptocurrency was 6.3 percent for Black consumers, 4.4 percent for Hispanic consumers, and 1.4 percent for white consumers. However, by 2024, these shares declined much more for Black and Hispanic consumers than for white consumers: to 3.2 percent, 2.8 percent, and 1.3 percent, respectively.

The share of consumers who pay with cryptocurrency was significantly higher among U.S. non-citizens than U.S. citizens in 2022 and 2024. However, like Black consumers, the share declined significantly for non-citizens, from 5.4 percent in 2022 to 2.6 percent in 2024.

**Chart 2: Shares of consumers who pay with cryptocurrency declined from 2022 to 2024 across almost all types of consumers**




Notes: AFS stands for alternative financial services. Green and light purple dashed lines indicate the shares of consumers who pay with cryptocurrency among all consumers in 2022 and 2024, respectively.
Sources: Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System and authors' calculations.

Consumers who are self-employed or work for a family business were significantly more likely to use cryptocurrency for payments than consumers with other types of employment or those who are not employed (including retired). For consumers who are self-employed or who work for a family business, the share of consumers who pay with cryptocurrency declined moderately from 6.2 percent in 2022 to 4.7 percent in 2024.

Consumers' banking status, use of alternative financial services (AFS), and credit scores are also significantly correlated with their use of cryptocurrency for payments.[5] Unbanked consumers were more likely than banked consumers, AFS users were more likely than non-users, and consumers with a poor or very poor credit score were more likely than consumers with a higher score to use cryptocurrency for payments. From 2022 to 2024, the shares of consumers who pay with cryptocurrency moderately decreased for AFS users and barely decreased for unbanked consumers. In contrast, the share slightly increased for consumers with a poor or very poor credit score.

Consumer groups divided by income, age, education, or gender show modest variation in the share of consumers who pay with cryptocurrency. Within each category, low-income consumers, young consumers, male consumers, and consumers with low education were more likely to use cryptocurrency for payments than their counterparts.

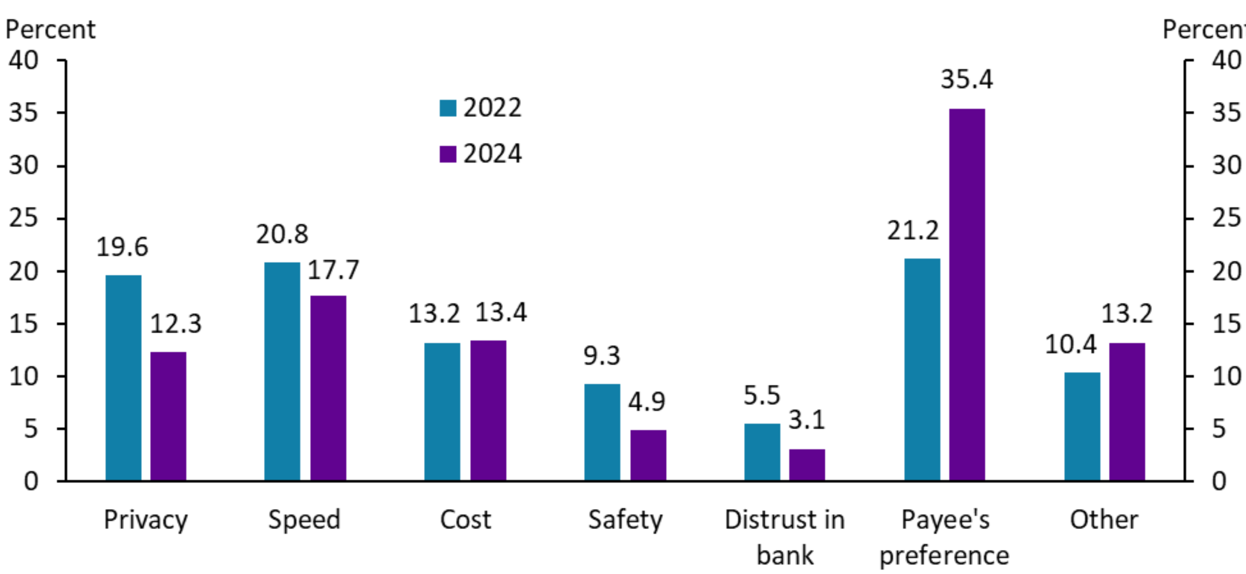
The share of consumers who pay with cryptocurrency declined from 2022 to 2024 across almost all consumer groups we examine. For most groups, the decline in the share was modest. However, for two groups—Black consumers and U.S. non-citizens—the decline was significant, more than 2 percentage points. Only for one group—consumers with a poor or very poor credit score—did the share of consumers who pay with cryptocurrency increase, though the increase was very small (0.3 percentage points).

**Reasons for paying with cryptocurrency**

As consumers' use of cryptocurrency for payments has declined, their reasons for use may also have changed. Because the SHED has asked consumers about their main reasons for paying with cryptocurrency since 2022, we compare the distribution of these reasons in 2022 and 2024.

The distribution of main reasons consumers use cryptocurrency for payments clearly changed from 2022 to 2024. In 2022, the top three main reasons were (1) "person or business receiving the money preferred cryptocurrency" (payee's preference), (2) "to send the money faster" (speed), and (3) privacy. Each of these three reasons accounted for about 20 percent of users (blue bars in Chart 3). However, in 2024, payee's preference became by far the most cited reason, with more than 35 percent of users citing this reason (purple bars). Speed (18 percent) became a distant second, followed by cost (13 percent) and privacy (12 percent). Except for the "other" reason, payee's preference is the only reason that materially increased its share, and all other reasons either decreased their share or kept almost the same share.

**Chart 3: Consumers who used cryptocurrency for payments have increasingly cited payee's preference as their main reason for doing so**




Sources: Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System and authors' calculations.

This change in the distribution of main reasons for using cryptocurrency for payments suggests that consumers' use of cryptocurrency has become more passive. While those citing privacy, speed, cost, or safety may be actively choosing cryptocurrency over alternative payment methods, the shares have declined for all but cost, which barely increased from 2022 to 2024. In contrast, those citing payee's preference—the only share besides "other" to substantially increase—may have been directed or nudged by their payees to use cryptocurrency.

**Conclusion**

Recent U.S. legislation establishing a framework for the issuance of stablecoins could increase the use of stablecoins for payments. Despite the availability of stablecoins or other types of cryptocurrencies for payments, the share of U.S. consumers who use cryptocurrency for payments has been very small and has slightly declined from nearly 3 percent to less than 2 percent in recent years. In addition, the share of consumers who pay with cryptocurrency declined for almost all groups of consumers regardless of their demographic or financial characteristics. Moreover, consumers' main reason for paying with cryptocurrency has shifted from the benefits of cryptocurrency relative to alternative payment methods (such as privacy, speed, cost, and safety) to the payee's preference for receiving money with cryptocurrency, suggesting consumers' use of cryptocurrency for payments has become more passive in recent years. Whether and how the evolving regulatory landscape around crypto assets in general and stablecoins in particular could facilitate consumer adoption of stablecoins for payments remains to be seen.

## Endnotes

[1] According to the SHED, the share of U.S. consumers who owned cryptocurrency (regardless of their purpose) also declined, from 12.3 percent in 2021 to 8.4 percent in 2024.
[2] This decline indicates that the number of U.S. adult consumers (age 18 and older) who use cryptocurrency for payments declined from 6.7 million in 2021 to 5.1 million in 2024.
[3] Some of the consumers who use cryptocurrency only for transferring money (or only for purchases) also own cryptocurrency as an investment.
[4] For example, Hayashi and Routh (2025) find that consumers who use cryptocurrency for transactions but not for investment are less financially literate compared with those who own cryptocurrency for investment or those who do not own cryptocurrency.
[5] AFS users are those who use at least one of the following five services: money order, check cashing, payday loan, pawn shop or auto title loan, and tax refund advance.

## References

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