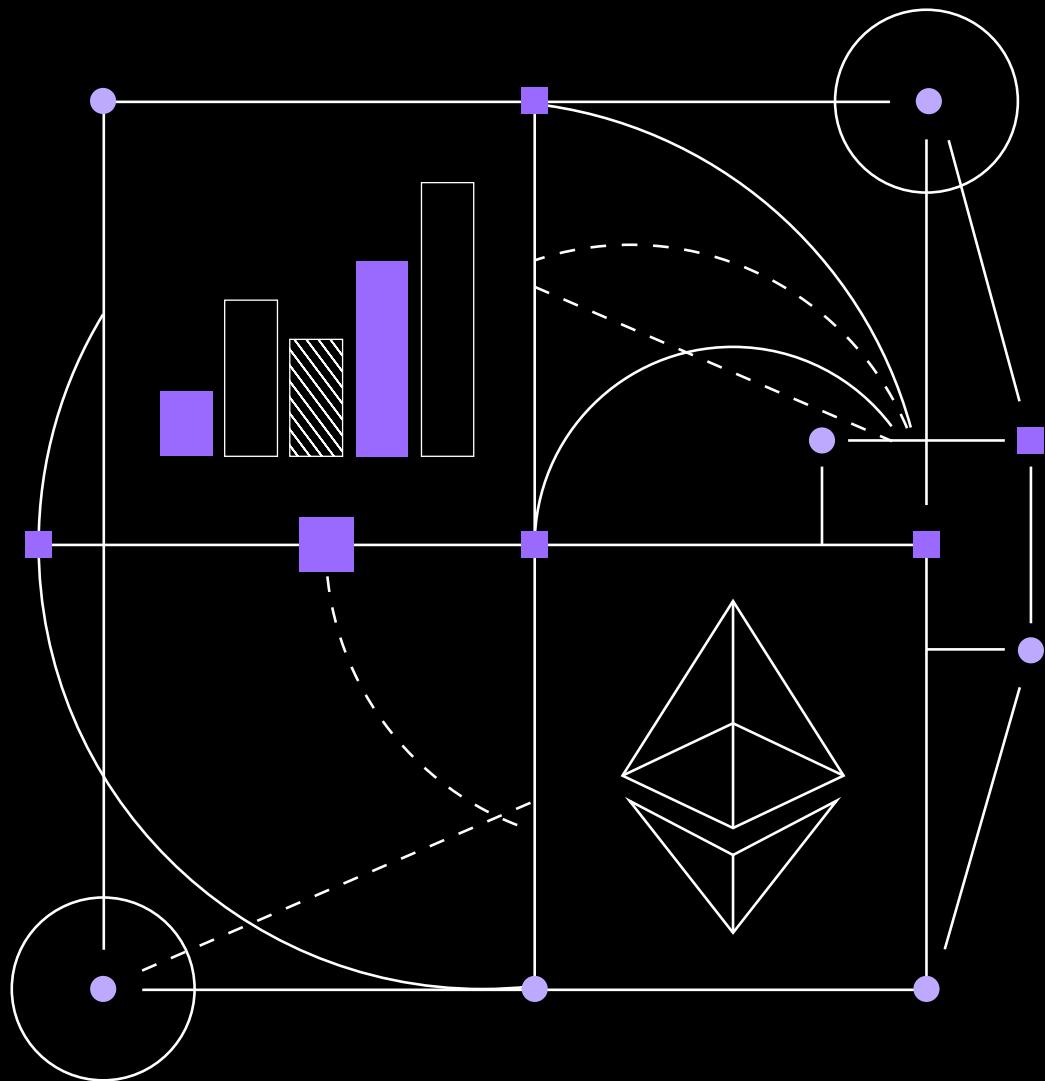




Galaxy Funds

# Ethereum's Role in the Modern Portfolio

DECEMBER 2021





# Introduction to Ethereum

Bitcoin technology, built on the Bitcoin blockchain, allows users to send bitcoin (BTC) balances. The Bitcoin blockchain maintains each user's BTC balance, making bitcoin an excellent non-sovereign store-of-value with unique monetary properties.

Ethereum takes blockchain technology further. On the Ethereum blockchain, all value is programmable as "smart contracts," which implement if/then logic into money itself. Imagine you have a \$1 bill into which you can implant computer code. For example: if spending the \$1 at a grocery store, then approve the transaction; if spending the \$1 at a candy store, then reject the transaction. Ethereum introduces this into every asset, and in doing so, it significantly expands the world's choices for interacting with money.

Since 2015, the Ethereum blockchain has grown into the most actively used blockchain in the world. Ether (ETH), the cryptocurrency which powers the Ethereum blockchain, is now the second-largest cryptocurrency by market capitalization at \$549 billion.<sup>1</sup> The Ethereum blockchain's open-source rails allow for the development of decentralized applications, which tap into smart contracts as their backend servers.

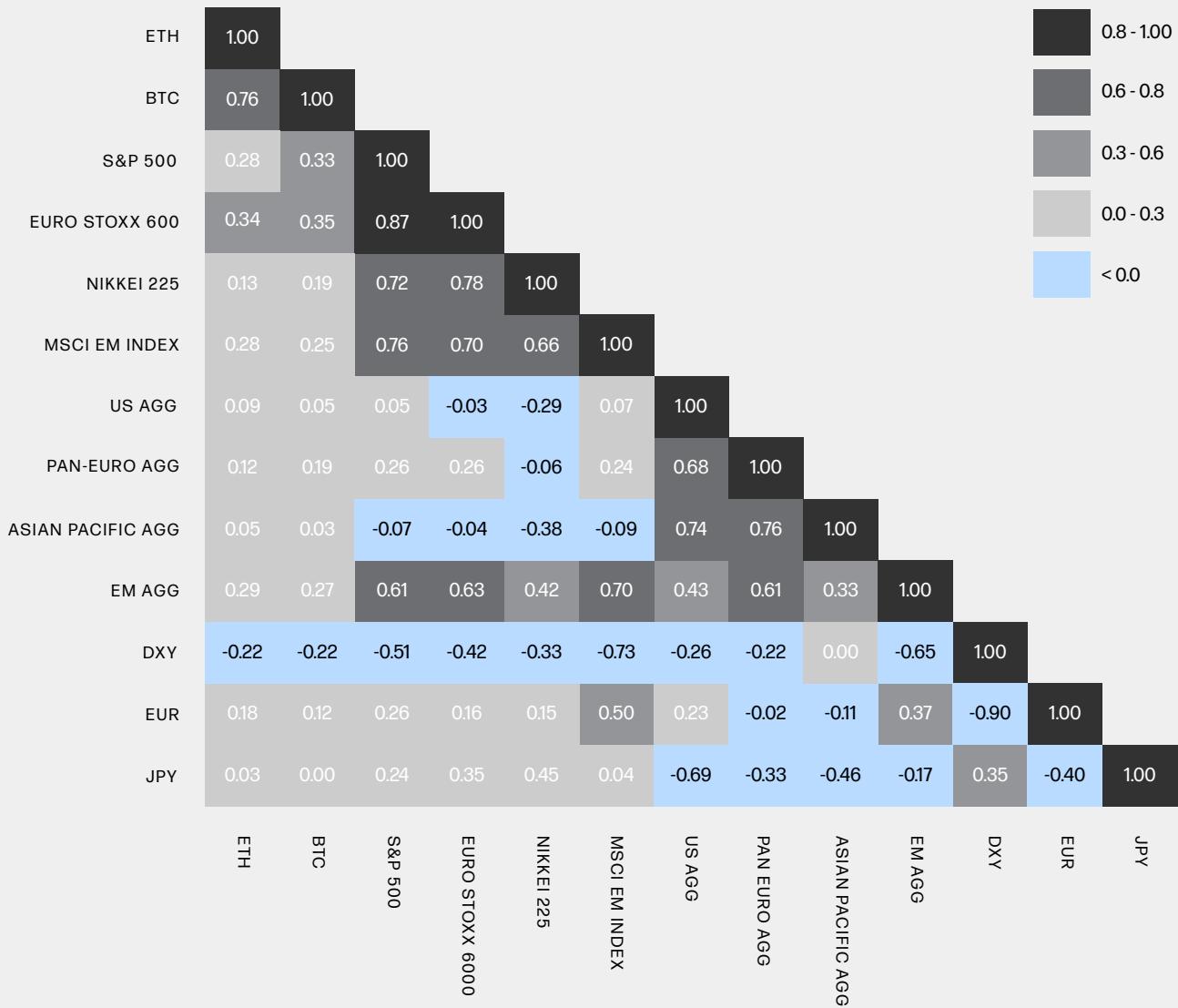
Upon inception, 72 million ETH were created and distributed in an initial crowdsale. To control the rate of new supply issuance, Ethereum's disinflationary mechanism caps supply at an additional 5 million ETH per year, as the current inflation rate is around 4.5%. This is to prevent the arbitrary creation of new supply that would potentially lead to inflation. Like bitcoin mining, ETH miners who successfully package transactions into blocks and upload them to the blockchain receive "block rewards" for their effort. The current reward (as of the publishing date of this piece) is 1.2 ETH.<sup>2</sup>

1) Source: [CoinMarketCap.com](#)

2) As of 11/30/2021.



## Correlation with major indices/currencies<sup>3</sup>





# Ethereum is a new internet layer

Programmer Vitalik Buterin and several others co-founded the Ethereum blockchain in 2015. They realized that Bitcoin's principles extend beyond one currency to entire computer programs where identical inputs and programs produce agreement on outputs. This is known as "general programmability."

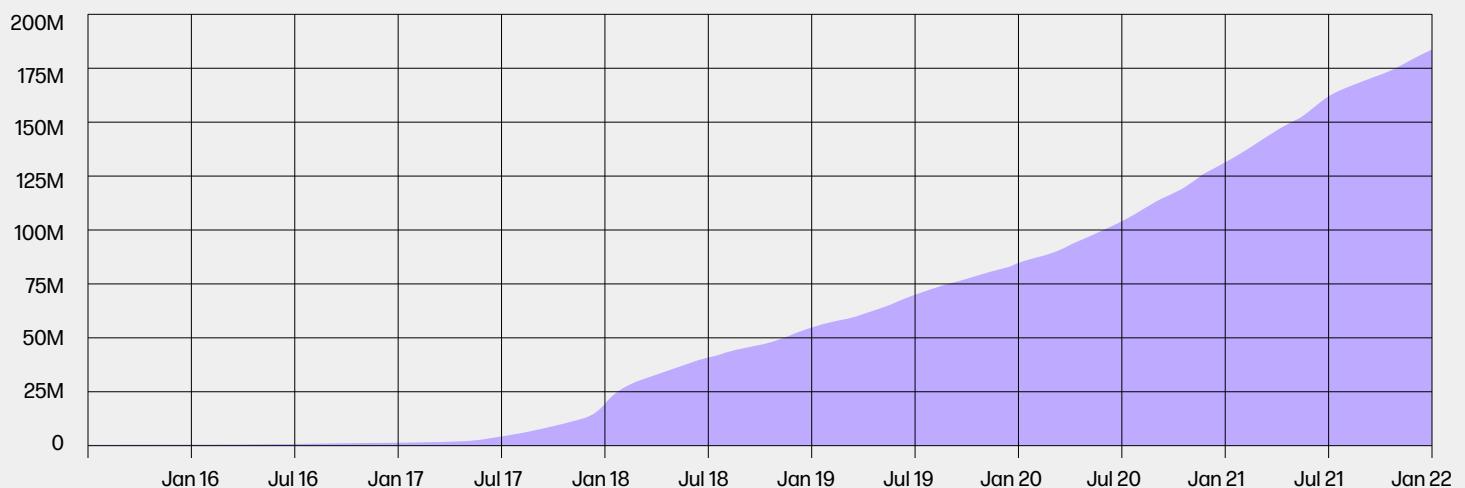
Ethereum enables properties that were never before possible on the internet. The Ethereum blockchain has a native form of value that lives on the internet. Its fully open-sourced, decentralized, and censorship-resistant properties mean that no large, siloed tech company can pull its smart contracts down. In this sense, it is the next iteration of the internet, solving some key problems.

First, the internet has no native concept of value. Before blockchains, money did not live on the internet; money was transferred online and settled offline. Some online payment companies would have preferred to make an internet-native currency, for example.

Second, applications and data are bundled. This allows tech conglomerates to manage silos that mine, sell, monopolize, and potentially abuse user data and access. Bundling applications and data also lands Big Tech between a rock and a hard place, forcing tech conglomerates to be both moderators and curators for content on the internet. Consider, for example, Facebook's Cambridge Analytica scandal. Or Twitter's recent banning of President Trump. The next iteration of the internet offers an imperturbable content substrate that platforms can tap into.

Third, closed applications stifle innovation. They do not incentivize open-source development and they hinder natural market competition. The next iteration of the internet is a collection of open, public APIs. Open-source code allows users to compose modular programs to create a superset of functionality.

## Unique Addresses<sup>4</sup>



<sup>4</sup>) Source: etherscan.io as of 11/30/2021.

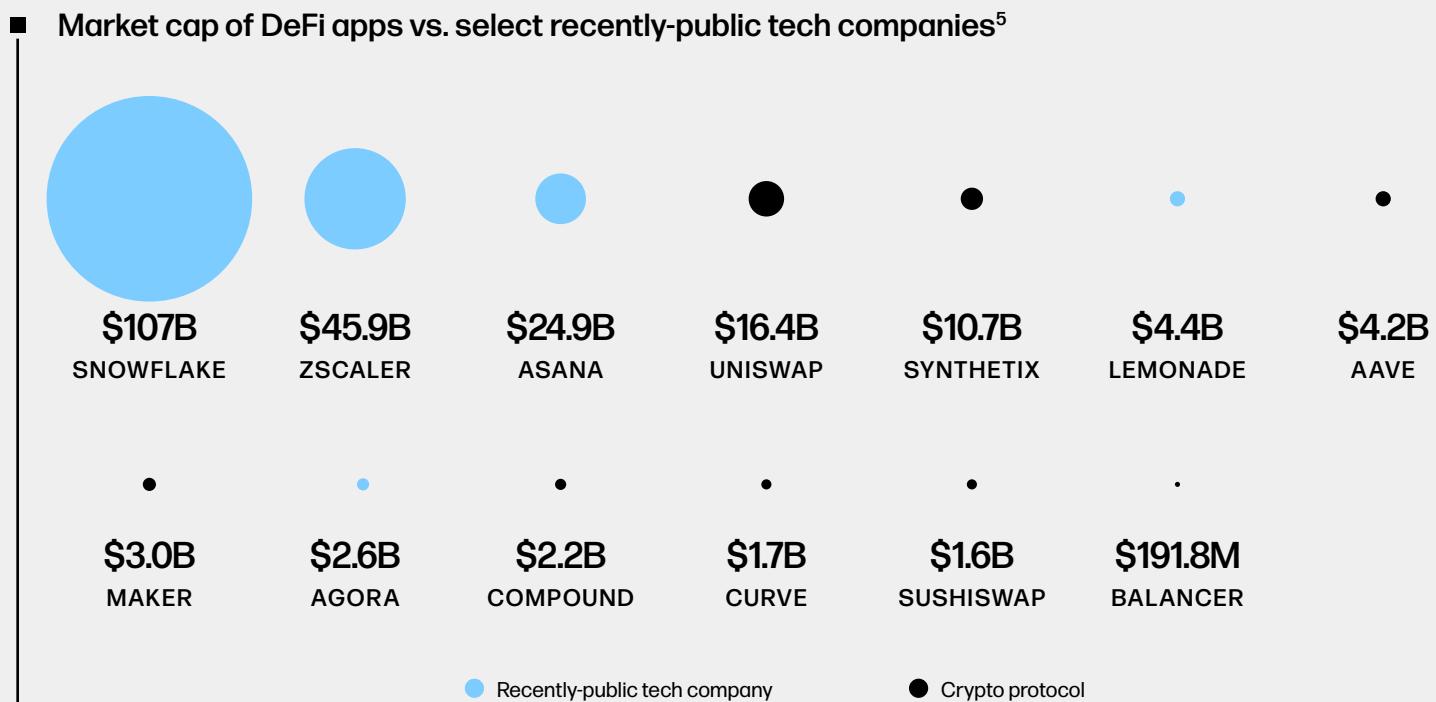


# The rise of Decentralized Finance and NFTs

We see, in real-time, just how useful Ethereum technology really is as we watch the rise of Decentralized Finance (DeFi) and non-fungible tokens (NFTs). DeFi is a global, open alternative to traditional financial services, including savings, loans, trading, insurance, yield-generation, and more. Ethereum now hosts over a dozen DeFi applications valued at more than \$1 billion, including Compound, Uniswap, and Aave. These protocols are quietly producing up to hundreds of millions in annualized revenue. The increase in total value locked on the DeFi network jumped from \$677M in January 2020 to \$15.9B in January 2021 and now rests at \$112B as of November 2021. To put it simply, total value locked represents the number of assets that are currently being staked in a specific protocol.

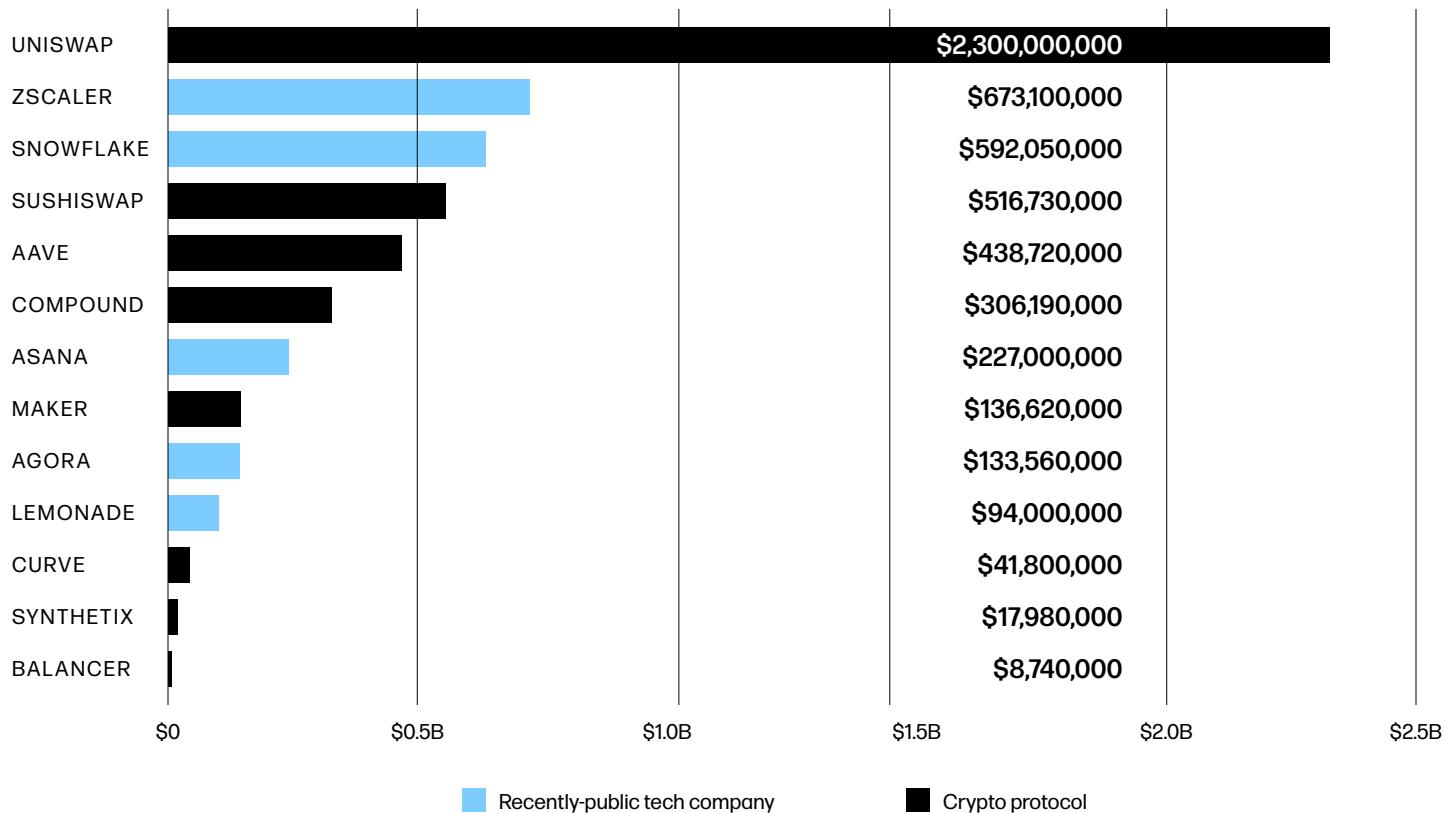
DeFi runs on smart contract blockchains such as Ethereum, automatically executing contracts when conditions are met. Ethereum's general programmability allows for this sophisticated functionality and enables developers to build financial services decentralized apps. DeFi has experienced exponential growth throughout 2021 that we anticipate will continue.

A non-fungible token (NFT) is a unique crypto asset that cannot be exchanged for another thing of equal value. In the same way that the Mona Lisa painting cannot be substituted, you cannot replicate an NFT. Think of it this way: one bitcoin token is worth the same as another bitcoin token, and theoretically, you could trade bitcoin tokens with a friend, preserving the value in the exchange. NFTs do not function that way. NFTs are a one-of-a-kind digital entity, whether your NFT is a drawing, song, video, or other digital creation.



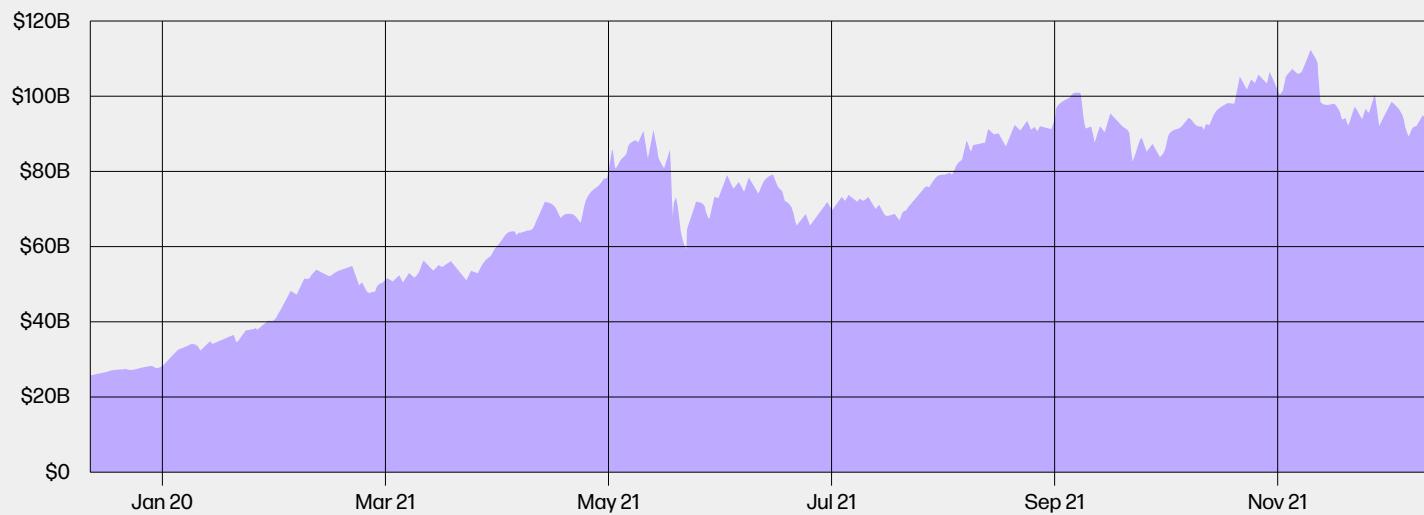


## Annualized revenue of DeFi apps vs. select recently-public tech companies (30d vs. quarterly annualized)<sup>6</sup>



6) Source: Yahoo Finance and The Block. Figures as of 10/31/2021.

## Total value locked (USD) in DeFi<sup>7</sup>



7) Source: DeFi Pulse as of 12/2021



# Ethereum 2.0

Ethereum 2.0 is the initiative to increase the scalability of the Ethereum blockchain. The existing Ethereum implementation is only scalable to 30 transactions per second. This limitation caused “gas prices” (the amount of ETH required to fuel transactions) to rise throughout 2020. The high gas fees are a result of congestion on the Ethereum network. Upgrading to Ethereum 2.0 will increase the threshold for transactions per second, directly reducing congestion and Ethereum gas fees.

When complete, the redesigned Ethereum 2.0 blockchain will see throughput—transaction speed—rise to ~100,000 transactions per second, according to a tweet from co-founder Vitalik.<sup>8</sup> This advancement will deliver higher throughput than the current VISA network, which averages 1,700 TPS. Additional gains will come from “off-chain” optimizations, commonly referred to as layer-2 solutions.<sup>9</sup> Phase 0, the launch of the Ethereum 2.0 blockchain known as the “Beacon Chain,” is the initial phase in what will be a 2-year process to make the Ethereum 2.0 blockchain production-ready. Launching the Ethereum 2.0 initiative required 524,288 ETH of deposits in a smart contract to provide the initial economic security, which has to do with Proof of Stake. Proof of Stake (PoS) is an algorithm employed by cryptocurrency protocols to reach consensus. In PoS blockchains, an individual or group is algorithmically chosen to verify transactions with computer hardware based on the tokens they have staked or locked up in the network as a form of collateral. The people sending their ETH to the Beacon Chain contract were doing so in order to act as validators for the network. At the end of November 2020, more than 1,190,000 ETH were deposited. Investors took it as a vote of confidence: ETH rose 58.0% that month.

Ethereum 2.0 will not cause any disruption to current ETH holders. Ethereum 1.0 will seamlessly become part of the 2.0 chain; this process is called “The Merge.”

A fully scaled Ethereum blockchain will broadly create a trustless, decentralized settlement layer for assets. This advanced blockchain will offer the ability to move value around the world for pennies, allowing for a new system of stablecoin payment rails that could replace current bank wire and payment systems. Ethereum’s utility extends far beyond financial inclusion, however, with related developments in gaming and NFTs offering people forms of provable digital ownership.

Many of these functions currently exist, but high gas fees outprice global usage. Paying a \$10 gas fee to send assets is still more efficient than a bank wire, but this could drop dramatically when ETH 2.0 and its accompanying roll-ups are fully implemented, opening the door to more transactions, more growth on the network, and opportunities for everyone in the world.

## Ethereum comparison

### Ethereum 1.0

### TRANSACTIONS PER SECOND

**30**

**~100,000**

### SECURITY MECHANISM

**Proof of work**

**Proof of stake**

### NUMBER OF BLOCKCHAINS

**1**

**64+**

<sup>8</sup>) Source: [Twitter.com/VitalikButerin](https://Twitter.com/VitalikButerin)

<sup>9</sup>) Source: [Ethereum.org](https://Ethereum.org) as of 6/30/2021.



# Ethereum in the portfolio

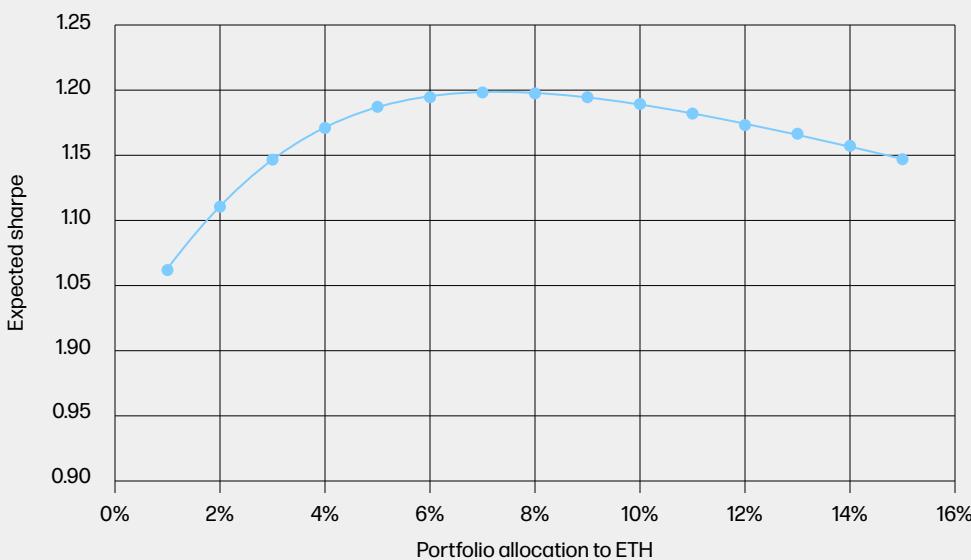
ETH is a growth asset: it is a bet on the growing network effect of an exciting new information substrate. It is a bet that more billion-dollar applications will be built on the Ethereum blockchain.

It is closest to a basket of early-stage, high-growth technology stocks that provides investors exposure to the explosion of next-gen smart contracts and decentralized applications. In this sense, investing in ETH is like investing in the future of the internet. We expect the value of ETH to increase as the Ethereum blockchain solidifies its position as the preferred blockchain for the next iteration of the internet.

Like bitcoin, investing in nascent ETH is primarily about allocation sizing. Allocation sizing depends on an investor's risk profile and time horizon. But, if you conceptualize ETH as analogous to an index of high-growth technology stocks, you might consider sizing it accordingly.

ETH's last bull run was mainly tied to bitcoin's concurrent run. Three years later, ETH now stands on its own with clear, real-life use cases. The Ethereum blockchain will continue to mature as the base layer technology for smart contracts and decentralized applications. And ETH will stand to benefit as the next iteration of the internet evolves.

## Sharpe vs. allocation to ETH



## Findings

- Sharpe ratio is optimized at about 7% allocation to ETH (as opposed to 10% for BTC when tested a month ago).
- Strongest marginal improvement occurs in the 1%-2% range, suggesting even a small allocation to ETH could improve Sharpe significantly. This shows the benefit of ETH as an asset with low correlation with major markets.



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Please note that the following are not all the risk factors associated with Digital Assets or the Funds (each, a “Fund”). Refer to the Offering Memorandum of the applicable Fund for more risk factors.

**Investment Risks Generally.** An investment in the Fund, involves a high degree of risk, including the risk that the entire amount invested may be lost. The Fund will invest in Digital Assets (such as Bitcoin, Ethereum, other cryptocurrencies or blockchain based assets, including those that represent the Decentralized Finance (or DeFi) portion or sector of the digital assets market) using strategies and investment techniques with significant risk characteristics, including risks arising from the volatility of the global Digital Assets markets and the risk of loss from counterparty defaults. The Fund’s investment program may use investment techniques that involve substantial volatility and can, in certain circumstances, substantially increase the adverse impact to which the Fund may be subject. All investments made by the Fund will risk the loss of capital. No guarantee or representation is made that the Fund’s investment program will be successful, that the Fund will achieve its investment objective or that there will be any return of capital invested to investors in the Fund, and investment results may vary.

**Different from Directly Owning Bitcoin, Ethereum or Other Digital Assets.** The performance of the Fund will not reflect the specific return an investor would realize if the investor actually purchased a Digital Asset. Investors in the Fund will not have any rights that Digital Asset holders have.

**No Guarantee of Return or Performance.** The obligations or performance of the Fund or the returns on investments in the Fund are not guaranteed in any way. Any losses of the Fund will be borne solely by investors in the Fund. Ownership interests in the Fund are not insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, and are not deposits, obligations of, or endorsed or guaranteed in any way, by any banking entity.

**Regulation.** Digital Assets, including Bitcoin, Ethereum and DeFi tokens, are loosely regulated. Ongoing and future regulatory actions may alter, perhaps to a materially adverse extent, the value of a Fund’s investment. If any Digital Asset is determined to be a “security” under U.S. federal or state securities laws or a Digital Asset exchange is determined to be operating illegally, it may have material adverse consequences for Digital Assets due to negative publicity or a decline in the general acceptance of Digital Assets. As such, any determination Digital Asset exchanges are operating illegally or that any Digital Asset is a security under U.S. federal or state securities laws may adversely affect the value of a particular Digital Asset or Digital Assets generally and, as a result, the value of a Fund’s investment.

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**Value.** Several factors may affect the price of Digital Assets, including Bitcoin, Ethereum and DeFi tokens, including, but not limited to: supply and demand, investors’ expectations with respect to the rate of inflation, interest rates, currency exchange rates or future regulatory measures (if any) that restrict the trading of a Digital Asset or the use of a Digital Asset as a form of payment. There is no assurance that a Digital Asset will maintain its long-term value in terms of purchasing power in the future, or that acceptance of bitcoin payments by mainstream retail merchants and commercial businesses will continue to grow.

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**Volatility & Supply.** Values of Digital Assets have historically been highly volatile, experiencing periods of rapid price increase as well as decline. For instance, there were steep increases in the value of certain Digital Assets, including Bitcoin, over the course of 2017, and multiple market observers asserted that digital assets were experiencing a “bubble.” These increases were followed by steep drawdowns. For example, during the period from December 17, 2017 to February 5, 2018, Bitcoin experienced a decline of roughly 60%. During the period from February 13, 2020, until March 16, 2020, the value of Bitcoin fell by over 50%. Bitcoin had a strong start to 2021, hitting an all-time high of nearly \$65k in April. But, it closed H1 2021 down 47% from its record. Supply of Digital Assets is determined by computer code, not by a central bank. For example, uncertainty related to the effects of Bitcoin’s recent and future “halving” could contribute to volatility in the Bitcoin markets. The value of the Bitcoin or other Digital Assets held by a Fund could decline rapidly in future periods, including to zero.



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