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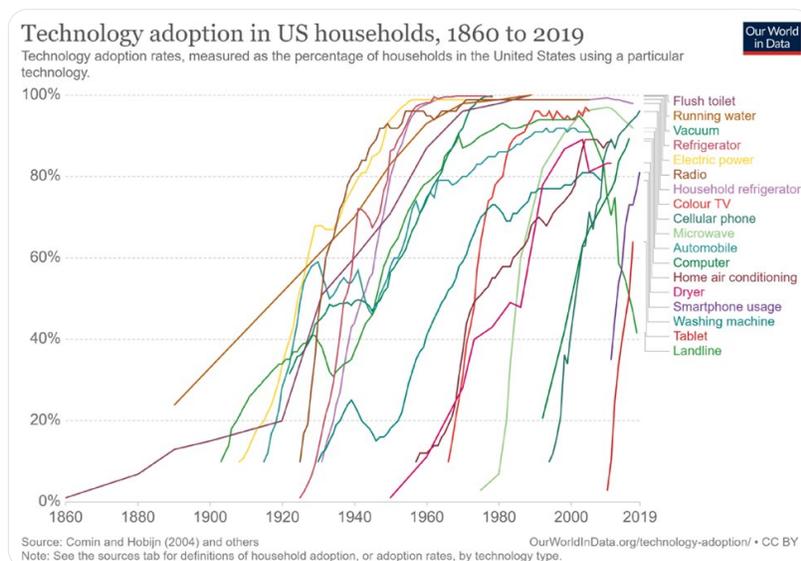
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Web3 believers assert that [#web3](#) is in its early adoption phase and that the masses will come just like they have with new technologies in the past.

There's some truth to this narrative but forces are at play that make [#web3](#) adoption MUCH MUCH MUCH more challenging.



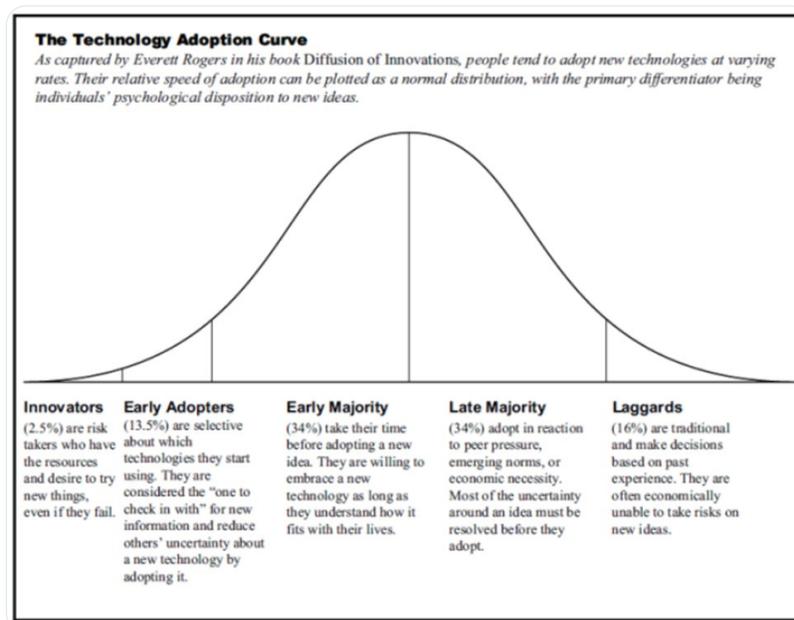
Everyone has probably seen a version of the tech adoption curve. The curves show that once a technology hits escape velocity it's only a matter of time before it becomes ubiquitous.



What's also clear is that technologies are "going vertical" faster than ever before.

129 years for the toilet to reach 100% of households in 1989.
120 years for drinking water to reach 100% of households in 1980.
99 years for fixed telephony to reach its highest peak of 95% in 2002.
78 years for the automobile to reach its highest peak of 92% in 1993.
48 years for electricity to reach 100% of households in 1956.
47 years for the radio and the refrigerator to reach 100% of homes in 1971.
25 years for the cell phone to go from 10% to 96% adoption in 2019.
24 years for the computer to go from 20% to 89% adoption in 2016.
23 years for the internet to go from 10% to 88% adoption in 2016.
14 years for social media to reach 80% adoption in 2017.
7 years for the tablet to reach 64% adoption in 2017.

But the truth is that web3 is still squarely onboarding the earliest of the early believers who are known as "Innovators".



Innovators are willing to take risks and try out new technologies. They're typically much younger than the demographic average and not scared of failure. Building awareness within their social circles for "the new thing that you need to know about" is a piece of who they are.

Early Adopters have many similar characteristics to Innovators but they differ on one important dimension: They care about their reputation.

As a result, they need to build a strong opinion of the technology they're being exposed to before deciding to fully support it.

Early adopters play with new technologies “silently” before telling anyone about them. They want to figure out and enjoy using a new technology before introducing it to others. If it doesn’t work they can stay in the shadows and no harm has been done to their reputation.

On the surface, the adoption curve for web3 seems to be following the same pattern as new technologies have in the past. It’s onboarding Innovators and maybe some Early Adopters.

Penetration is low (~200MM unique wallets vs. 5B+ internet users) but growing fast.

But this is where web3 is likely to deviate from historical norms.

The technology is revolutionary but the current experience is clunky and frustrating to use. There are no user manuals and few people can explain how things work.

But more importantly, the space is dangerous.

If something is difficult to use, onboarding happens slowly.

But if something is dangerous, it will be avoided like the plague.

Because web3 revolves around “self-custodial” experiences that involve data and money, when things go wrong they can go really wrong.

You can’t call your bank or chat with a customer service rep to reverse a transaction. When web3 things disappear they’re gone for good.

This is an uncomfortable and unfamiliar concept that doesn't sit well with billions of people who are used to protections and reversibility!

Imagine what the adoption curve would have been for email if users knew that opening the wrong email could result in all the information on their computer being wiped clean.

Imagine what the adoption curve would have been for iTunes if users knew that buying a song from the wrong site could result in all the songs they’ve ever purchased being moved to someone else’s account.

Imagine what the adoption curve would have been for eBay if users knew that using their payment technology (Paypal) could drain their entire wallet if they didn’t research the merchant selling them something on the site.

Imagine what the adoption curve would have been for ATM machines if users knew that losing their PIN would result in the money in their account becoming inaccessible forever.

Would the masses adopt a new technology if “being careful” required reading smart contracts and not straying from protected, walled gardens?

How would they feel if they made a mistake and the response was “Suck it up buttercup. That’s the price for not being careful”?

The answer is simple: The masses would think it just wasn't worth it!

So while Innovators and Early Adopters love playing with shiny new things, everybody else is much more concerned with well designed, dummy proof and complete solutions to painful problems.

This takes us back to web3's likely adoption curve and the single most important unsolved issue that's likely to slow it down.

The masses won't embrace web3 until easy-to-use, zero cost solutions emerge that reduce "expensive mistakes" and "scary outcomes" to negligible levels.

Solutions are emerging but none make the problem go away. Hardware wallets and browsers that can interpret contracts should help but they won't be enough for the masses.

Will we fix this anytime soon?

My web3 Magic 8-ball says: "Ask again later".

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