




Week 6 Meta Roundup

Expedition League and Builds

Data as of 05-Sep-2021



Methodology

- GGG publish 'the ladder' – a list of the top 15000 characters by XP.
- This also contains the top 15000 by solo delve depth (which overlaps a lot)
- Combined, these give an overview of the most successful build archetypes
- Website poe.ninja scrapes this data
- Also available for the hard modes (HC, SSF, HCSSF)
- Harder game modes do sharply constrain what successful builds look like
- Note! Some small % of players mess around with their builds for a laugh.

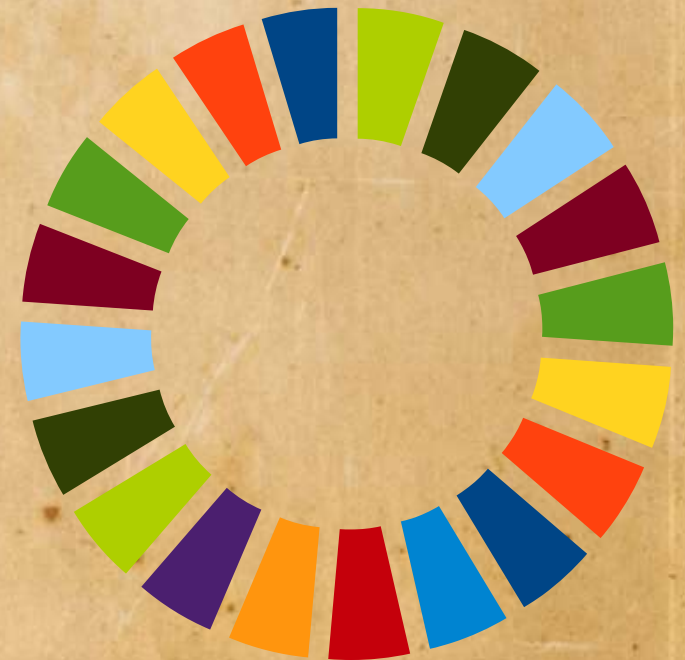
EXPEDITION							
LADDER		Class Filter: All		Auto refresh: <input type="checkbox"/>		REFRESH	EXPORT CSV
Rank	Account	Character	Class	Level	Experience	Depth	Depth (Solo)
2101	16 Gohan_Masenko	사랑은장애물이다	Hierophant	100	4250334444		
2102	26 cws444	Expedition_CQ	Necromancer	100	4250334444	193	193
2103	36 belanna	ManaModCheck	Hierophant	100	4250334444	131	131
2104	30 kygui	봉어탐험	Berserker	100	4250334444	215	215
2105	4 iatamChina	ana_mariabraga	Ascendant	99	4250085318		
2106	37 meltypro	SadgeKappa	Gladiator	99	4249338155	376	376
2107	15 knightduck179	Ducky_Ranger	Deadeye	99	4245318258		
2108	26 kivach	Криснеп	Occultist	99	4244647965	312	312
2109	33 Afosazky	yksazofA	Trickster	99	4241451984	51	51
2110	15 Lilsiz	Flexsize	Deadeye	99	4238683933		
2111	36 ISaMaShi	_SaRTeS_	Guardian	99	4238682276	275	275
2112	8 changyeop	qwerEXPEDITIONqwer	Hierophant	99	4235954790		
2113	28 pip212224	kitticoco	Deadeye	99	4230188892		
2114	13 gladiycy	토타_탐험	Hierophant	99	4228726258	227	227
2115	11 fayoli	Formidabl	Ascendant	99	4227852577		
2116	31 아파성	Expedition_san	Assassin	99	4224749388	232	232
2117	38 SingKZippo	MiNiCooPer	Occultist	99	4221420316	30	0
2118	25 Squirtrex	SquirtBlocks	Gladiator	99	4218141421	115	115
2119	33 1S3D	Exp_더비	Slayer	99	4215018806	143	143
2120	36 falagar112	CaptainAmericaWannabees	Gladiator	99	4206708258	43	43

PREV 1 2 103 104 105 **106** 107 108 109 747 748 749 750 NEXT 20 per page

Ascendancy Spread

- As a thought experiment, what would ‘perfect’ balance look like?
- Answer is not 5.26% to each ascendancy. Answer is each player making an independent ascendancy choice we can model as being random (they play their personal favorite)
- To model this, I assumed 20 ascendancies for easier numbers, and added another 823 players to the model to keep the same numbers
- Results – a pie chart that looks perfect and a chart that shows deviation.
- Reality is nothing like this, but also nothing like the metas with extreme dominance of one or two builds.

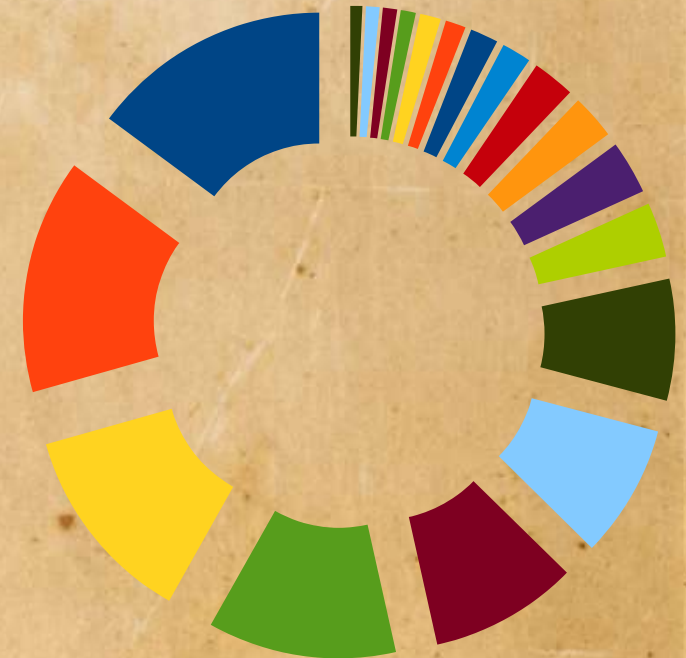
1	779	11	837
2	793	12	841
3	801	13	845
4	808	14	849
5	813	15	853
6	817	16	858
7	821	17	863
8	825	18	869
9	829	19	878
10	833	20	893



Ascendancy Spread

- How are we in practice?
- No Ascendancy truly towers over all the others. Contrast 3.7 with 49% Slayer.
- However, there is a clear 7-4-8 split. 7 excellent Ascendancies, 4 mid tier, 8 niche/bad.
- HC: Gladiator and Champion rise a lot, at the expense of most others
- SSF: Gladiator and Saboteur rise at the expense particularly of Ascendant
- HC SSF combines both effects.
- As expected, harder game modes allow less versatility. But also there's the SSF factor – many builds are highly dependent upon specific uniques. We see this especially in Hierophants, a build where 79% of SC trade players equip Soul Mantle. This means no Soul Mantle = don't roll Hiero for many people.

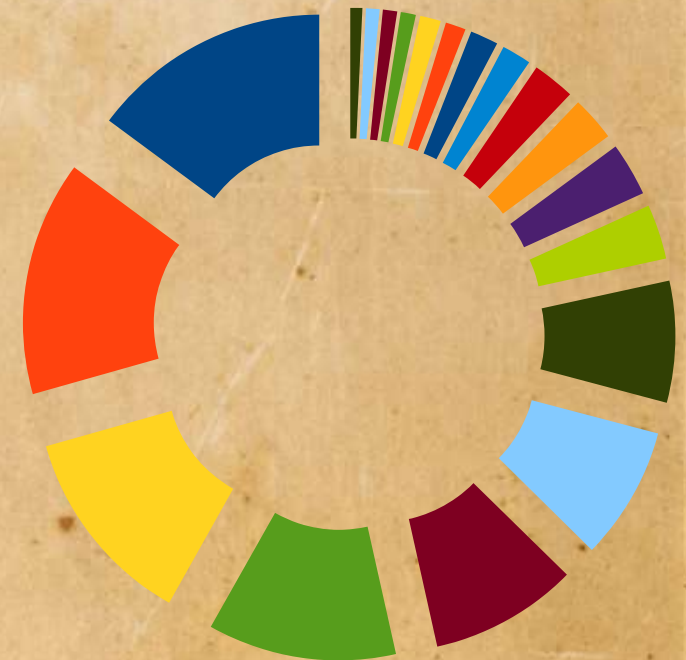
Necro	2360	Guard	440
Raider	2311	Sabo	418
Glad	1974	Slay	288
Asc	1852	Ele	274
Occ	1452	Jug	203
Dead	1309	Path	203
Heiro	1193	Chump	149
Bers	539	Chief	138
Ass	526	Trick	133
		Quiz	120



Ascendancy Spread

- Based on this, I'll rate this league a 6/10 for Ascendancy spread in SC Trade, and 4/10 in leagues with one (or both) difficulty mods added.
- This is actually a very high score relative to the past... Delirium, Harvest, Heist, Blight and Legion would score at most 2/10.
- For this to improve further, the bottom 8 Ascendancies need serious help. This might come from game balance changes – or merely from content creators popularizing new builds. But probably balance.

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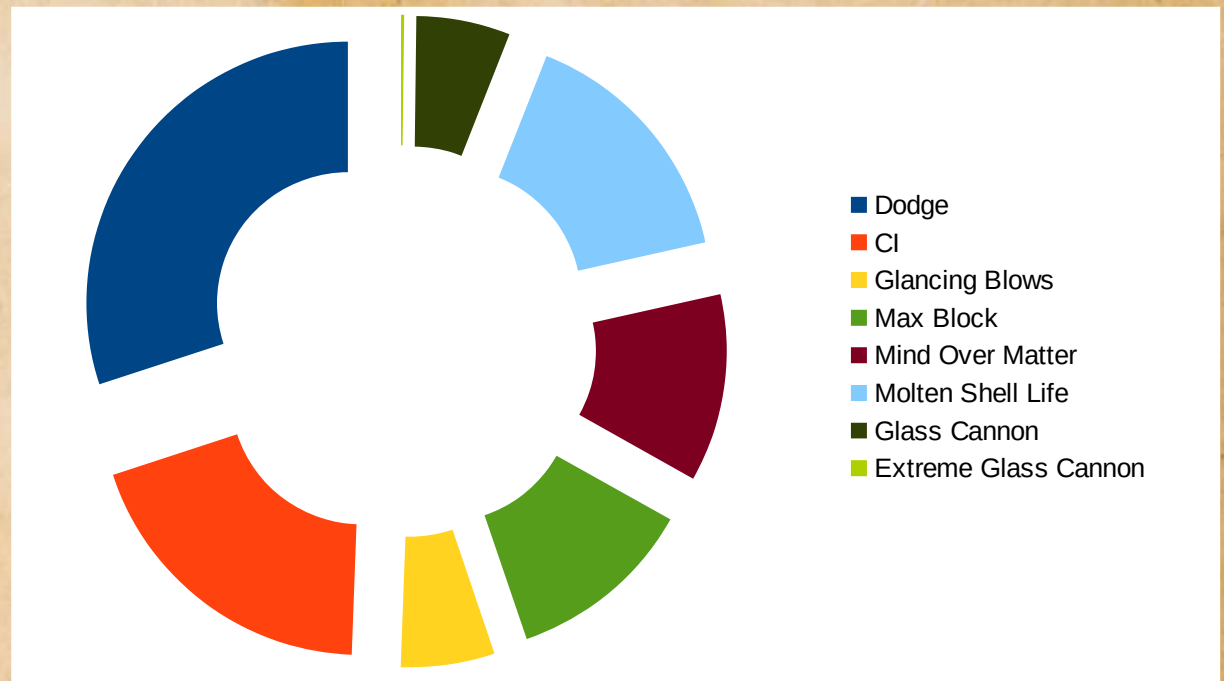
Defensive Style Viability

- There's several ways to try to stay alive in POE.
- Generally these revolve around specific keystones. QUICK RECAP:
- Dodge: This playstyle takes Acrobatics, Phase Acrobatics and Wind Dancer. As Acrobatics krangles your ability to scale block, armour and ES, it is almost always paired with Evasion. Takes enough life to survive small hits (~4500).
- Chaos Inoculation: Stack ES and rely upon block to mitigate damage then your ES pool to soak it. Synergizes very poorly with dodge.
- Glancing Blows: This keystone is often (not always) used alongside "recover X on block" nodes and a light investment in block. Usually a shield, or one of the specific staves that work well with it like (Replica) Duskdawn.
- Max Block: This playstyle sacrifices much more for defence than Glancing Blows but is much more durable. The Gladiator's Versatile Combatant is the best way to achieve this defensive layer, although there are others.
- Mind Over Matter: A large mana pool and decent life pool with either MOM keystone or Cloak of Defiance provide a large effective health pool. Often uses Immortal Call or a high level CWDT-Steelskin.
- Molten Shell Life: Generally identifiable by the use of the skill gem Molten Shell (and/or its Vaal version) these builds typically have 10000+ armour with readily managed buffs, and use this to turn MS into a large ablative shield alongside a good life pool, Fortify, block and Endurance Charges. Often at endgame these builds seek out Divine Flesh as well. Could work without Molten Shell back when Juggs were good.
- Glass Cannon: How I typically play. Defensive layer is not getting hit by manually dodging. Still invests a bit in life. Often uses Blast Freeze (large cluster) to preemptively freeze enemies.
- Extreme Glass Cannon: Best approach in Delve. Plays Dodge AND Chaos Inoculation and absolutely no investment in defence, not even resists. Dies to one hit from everything. Can do extraordinary damage.

Defensive Style Popularity

- Note: Numbers do not add to 100% as some builds fit more than one category.
- Glass Cannon estimate may be very wrong.
- ‘All’ means almost all, not every single individual. There’s always ONE person allocating Avatar of Fire while using Brutality Support and Atziri’s Promise, or Resolute Technique and Elemental Overload.
- People often respect to troll builds on quitting the league. This will poison the results, especially on defensive styles.
- As can be expected, this changes on HC a lot. Max Block AND Molten Shell Life at once is especially favoured there.
- SSF also impacts but there, I think causation is the other way around. SST Gladiator is the best build on “self craft with resources from first 100 maps” level gear, so THAT causes Max Block to excel in SSF this league.
- HC SSF these compound.

Dodge	31%	Most Ranger builds
CI	20%	Most Witch builds. Many Guardians alongside Glancing Blows.
Glancing Blows	6%	Most Templars.
Max Block	12%	All Gladiators.
Mind Over Matter	12%	Hierophants and Occultists
Molten Shell Life	16%	All Duelists and Marauders
Glass Cannon	6%	Estimate of popularity.
Extreme Glass Cannon	0.2%	Only a few dozen players this league.



Top Performing Skills

- Content Creator Effect and ‘New and Shiny Effect’
- Note: Content creator effect not limited to your language! There’s great people making Korean language guides that don’t get seen much by English speakers, for example. Causes regional divergence.
- Will list all skills that got >100 people to 96+
- Will also list some variants of those builds
- Totals 30 builds

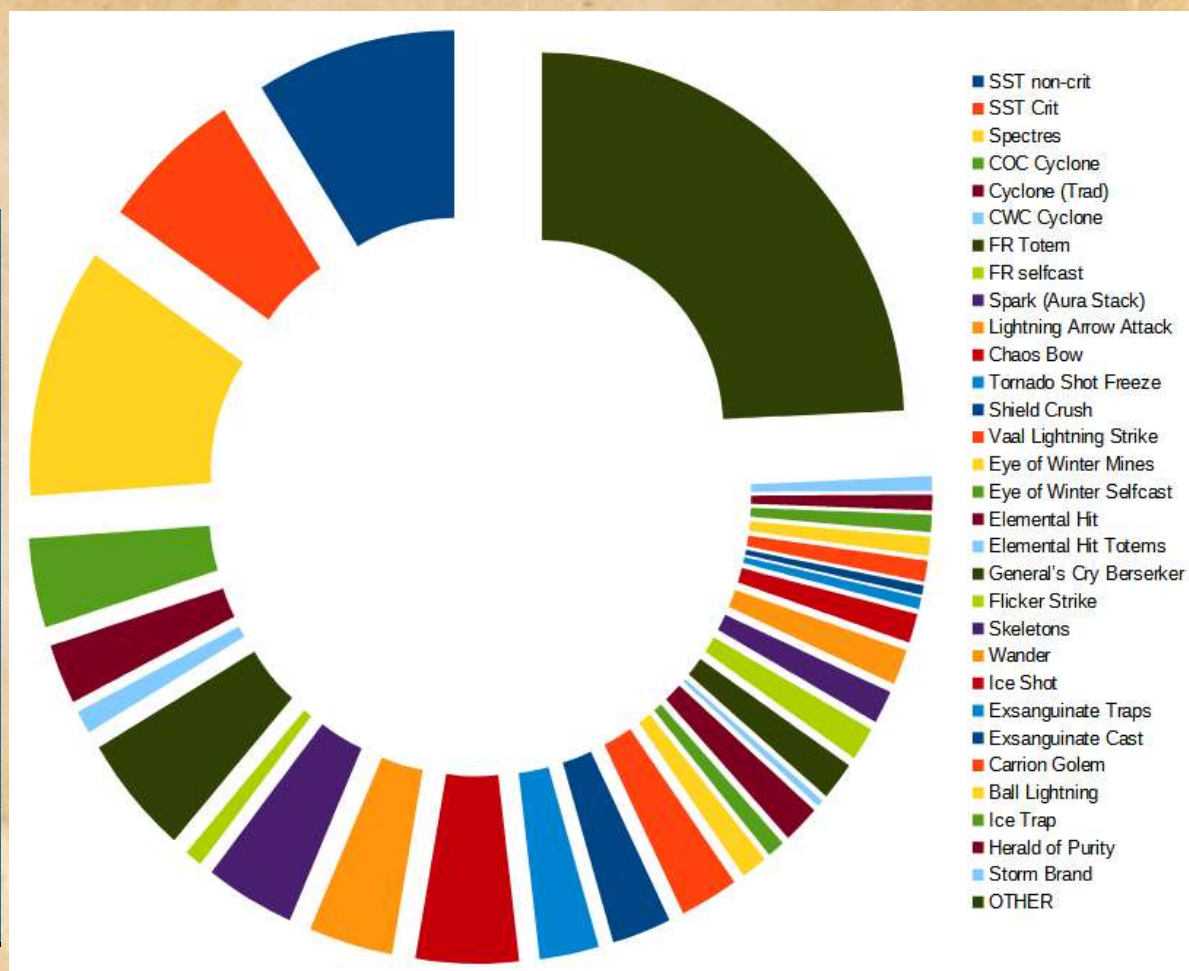
Near Misses

- These 33 builds didn't make the top 30.
- Spectral Helix. Freezing Pulse. Volatile Dead. Ethereal Knives Aura Stacker. Frost Blades. Winter Orb. Stone Golem. Penance Brand. Scourge Arrow. Essence Drain. Rage Vortex. Lightning Trap. SRS. Arc. Boneshatter. Ancestral Warchief totems. Herald of Thunder. Bane. Siege Ballista. RF. Lancing Steel. BV. Consecrated Path. Ice Crash. Cold DOT. Blight. HoAG. Zombies. Lacerate. Icestorm. Death Aura. Molten Strike. Glacial Cascade Mines.
- Each got 29+ to 96.
- Poor Soulrend also doesn't make the list (9 96+ characters), although I know of one person that did The Feared with it.

Skill Popularity

Ordering is odd as some builds are variants and I worked this out by sorting by skill. So Eye of Winter comes after Vaal Lightning Strike, but I split EOW into mines/non-mine.

Build	Players	Skill	Key Identifiers	Top Ascends
SST non-crit	1416	Spectral Shield Throw	Brutality Support	Gladiator
SST Crit	1006	Spectral Shield Throw	Seething Fury unique jewel	Raider
Spectres	1717	Summon Spectre		Necromancer
COC Cyclone	613	Cyclone/CastOnCrit	Cospri's Malice	Occ/Ass
Cyclone (Trad)	412	Cyclone WITHOUT triggers	Lion's Roar	Slayer
CWC Cyclone	160	Cyclone/CastWhileChannelling	The Stampede	Ascend/Hiero
FR Totem	821	Forbidden Rite	Soul Mantle	Hiero
FR selfcast	125	Forbidden Rite	Power Charge package	Occultist
Spark (Aura Stack)	636	Spark	Nebulis	Ascend
Lightning Arrow Attack	597	Lightning Arrow	Dying Sun, Bow, Crit	Deadeye
Chaos Bow	727	Toxic Rain and/or Caustic Arrow	Vicious Proj Support	Raider
Tornado Shot Freeze	421	Tornado Shot	Scales cold damage	Deadeye
Shield Crush	420	Shield Crush	Brutality Support	Glad/Berserk
Vaal Lightning Strike	417	Vaal Lightning Strike	Farrul's Fur	Raider
Eye of Winter Mines	188	Eye of Winter	Indigon	Ascend/Sabo
Eye of Winter Selfcast	125	Eye of Winter	Snakepit in right finger.	Occ
Elemental Hit	262	Elemental Hit	Bow, EDWA support	Raider
Elemental Hit Totems	47	Elemental Hit	Bow, Ballista Totem Support	Hiero
General's Cry Berserker	263	General's Cry	Lion's Roar, Kitava's Teach	Berserk
Flicker Strike	227	Flicker Strike	Paradoxica, Darkray	Raider
Skeletons	227	Vaal Summon Skeletons		Necromancer
Wander	244	Power Siphon, Kinetic Blast	Atzir's Reflection	Varied (Occ)
Ice Shot	200	Ice Shot	Acrobatics, Dying Sun	Deadeye
Exsanguinate Traps	79	Exsanguinate	Trap Support. Also uses Set	Sabo
Exsanguinate Cast	66	Exsanguinate	Without Trap Support	Deadeye
Carrion Golem	142	Carrion Golem	Nerfs can't kill this thing	Necromancer
Ball Lightning	129	Ball Lightning	Stacks mana	Guard/Hiero
Ice Trap	118	Ice Trap	Tinkerskin	Sabo/Raider
Herald of Purity	108	Herald of Purity	Circle of Guilt x2	Guardian
Storm Brand	100	Storm Brand	WIDE variance	Varied (Ass)
OTHER	3852		Strong bias to Ascendants	




Effect of Headhunter and Unnatural Instinct

- Players able to afford a Headhunter disproportionately tend towards Raider and Deadeye, as elemental attack builds with high movespeed benefit more from the ridiculous belt than anything else.
- UI causes players who can afford it to move toward Ascendant somewhat, as the position near Shaper is utterly ridiculous for this jewel and all Scions are already near there.
- This effect is minimal now for UI as (almost) every 96+ can afford a 10ex jewel. But for a 100ex belt, it matters.

Effect of Hard Modes



- The nature of SSF makes some builds nearly impossible there.
 - As an example, only 13 players in SSF have Badge of the Brotherhood equipped. It's a very rare item with no deterministic farming method AND one that isn't great without other rare items (Void Battery).
 - And there are 0 Duskdawns or Replica Duskdawns used there for the same reason – almost no one has it and of the few that do – do they want to play the builds it enables?
 - This makes builds with little need for power uniques disproportionately good in SSF.
 - In HC it's similar as items leave the economy, but middling rarity uniques like Soul Mantle are more available.
 - In HC, some common boss drops are Unnatural Instinct level prices. Most notably, 6ex Viridi's Veil. Also The Saviour, Atziri's Rule and Olroth's Resolve.
 - These combine to a perfect storm of Gladiators everywhere.
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