



The Golden Crusade

Report:
World of
Warcraft
Gold
Survey

2013

A report on the 2013 World of Warcraft Gold Surveying detailing players' levels of gold, wealth distribution (in game) and key demographics

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INTRODUCTION

The World of Warcraft Gold Survey, now in its third year, is an annual survey of players regarding their gold levels and select key demographics. Each year the World of Warcraft Gold Survey provides valuable information that would not be available through any other means.

The World of Warcraft Gold Survey, then called the World of Warcraft Wealth Survey, started in 2011 in response to a poll on The Consortium forum by Sinshroud. That year saw over 2000 respondents and the final report was read by tens of thousands.

Links to previous years' reports can be found at <http://thegoldencrusade.net/world-of-warcraft-wealth-survey/>

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What's the point of the survey?

This survey aims to gather information about the player base's gold, analyze gold distribution, look for trends, and compare to past data. The World of Warcraft Gold Survey is simply to sate curiosity and provide a better look at what players have in their (digital) pockets. This survey and report are not associated with any professional organization, school, or formal study.

Why is the survey hosted on TheGoldenCrusade.net and not on a third party site?

While self-hosting have, in the past, caused some people to have concern over the security of the survey, it is the most economical means to conduct the survey. The World of Warcraft Gold Survey pulls in too many responses to make use of the free services available, but the subscriptions are too costly for this survey which only runs once a year. Respondents can be assured that responses are completely confidential, and have no way of being linked to them.

DISCLAIMER

This report and survey has no affiliation with any organization. The author makes no claim to being a professional statistician or economist (in fact, at the time of this writing, said author is about half way through a statistics course and an economy course).

ERRORS AND DATA THROWN OUT

The nature of the survey leads to several possible sources of error, not only was it an opt in survey but some respondents may have felt compelled to lie. Additionally, there may have been errors by some respondents filling out the survey.

To combat some of these sources of error, some entries had to be excluded. Data that didn't match the following criteria were discarded for the purposes of this report:

- Less than 10 years played
- North America or EU player
- Less than 100,000,000 gold

Since the game was released in 2004, 9 years ago, responses that listed 10 or more years played were considered unreliable.

Since there was only one response each identifying as from Korea or China, these two results were discarded, so all data gathered in this report will be pertaining to North American and European players only.

Finally, responses that listed over 100 million gold were discarded. This number was chosen because it is the gold cap for a single account (50 characters per account, each with a guild bank, giving a total gold capacity of 2 million gold per character). Any values over this are likely falsified or results from professional gold farming operations (which are irrelevant to the study).

Of the 3912 completed responses, 3878 were usable based on this criteria.

SUMMARY

The survey ran from October 28th through November 10th, 2013 and collected 3,878 usable results. The survey was voluntary and requests for respondents were posted at the following locations:

- WoW Insider
- /r/WoW
- /r/WoWEconomy
- /r/WoWGoldMaking
- MMO-Champion Forums
- Wowhead Forums
- US and EU official forums
- The Golden Crusade
- Phat Lewts Gold Blog
- Social media

The mean gold players reported having was 472,979 gold, and the median was 100,000 gold. Of the 3,878 responses, 3,133, or 80.8% of the responses, were under the sample mean. The 1st and 3rd quartiles were 25,000 and 325,000, respectively.

Of the 3,878 responses, 74.9% of responses identified as playing on North American servers, while 25.1% of responses identified as playing on European servers. The average player reportedly started playing World of Warcraft 6 years ago (sample mean was 6.12 years, median 6).

Of this year's respondents, 74.8% reported having never taken the survey before, 8.3% were unsure, and 16.9% reported having taken the survey before.

DEMOGRAPHICS

REGION

74.9% of respondents reported playing on North American servers, while 25.1% reported playing on EU servers. The value in parenthesis are their difference from overall sample.

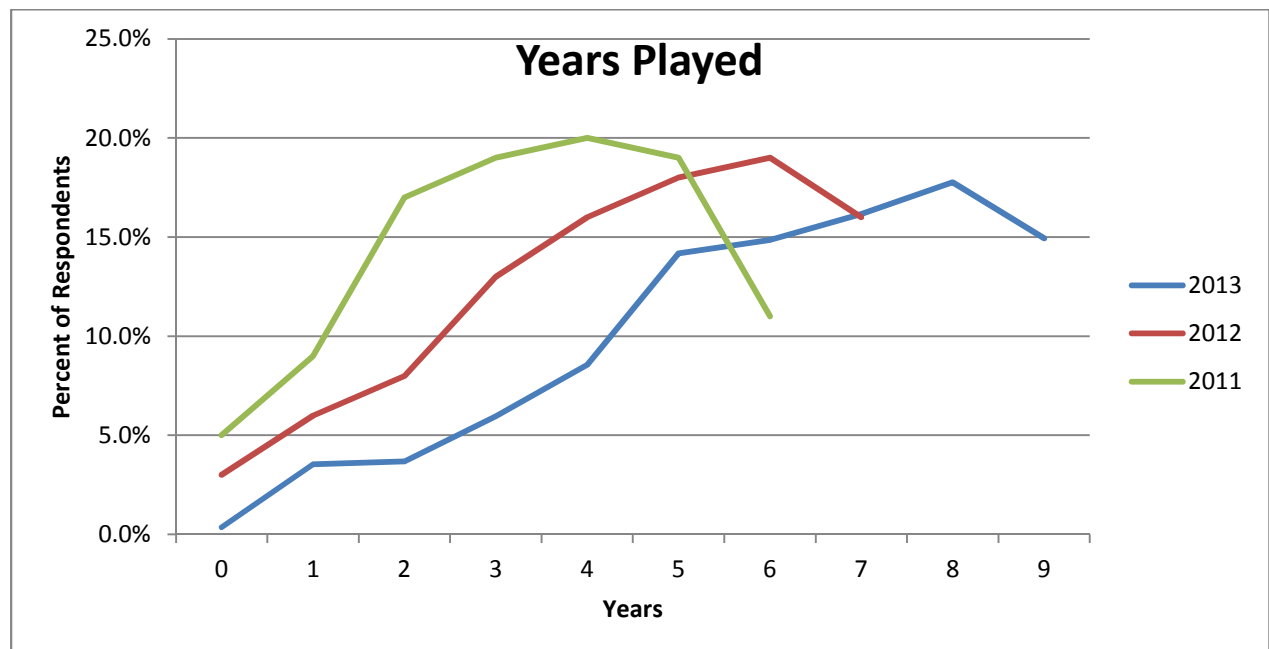
Region	Average	Median
North America	425,288 (-10%)	95,000 (-5%)
EU	615,170 (+30%)	104,500 (+4.5%)

YEARS PLAYED

The average respondent started playing World of Warcraft 6 years ago

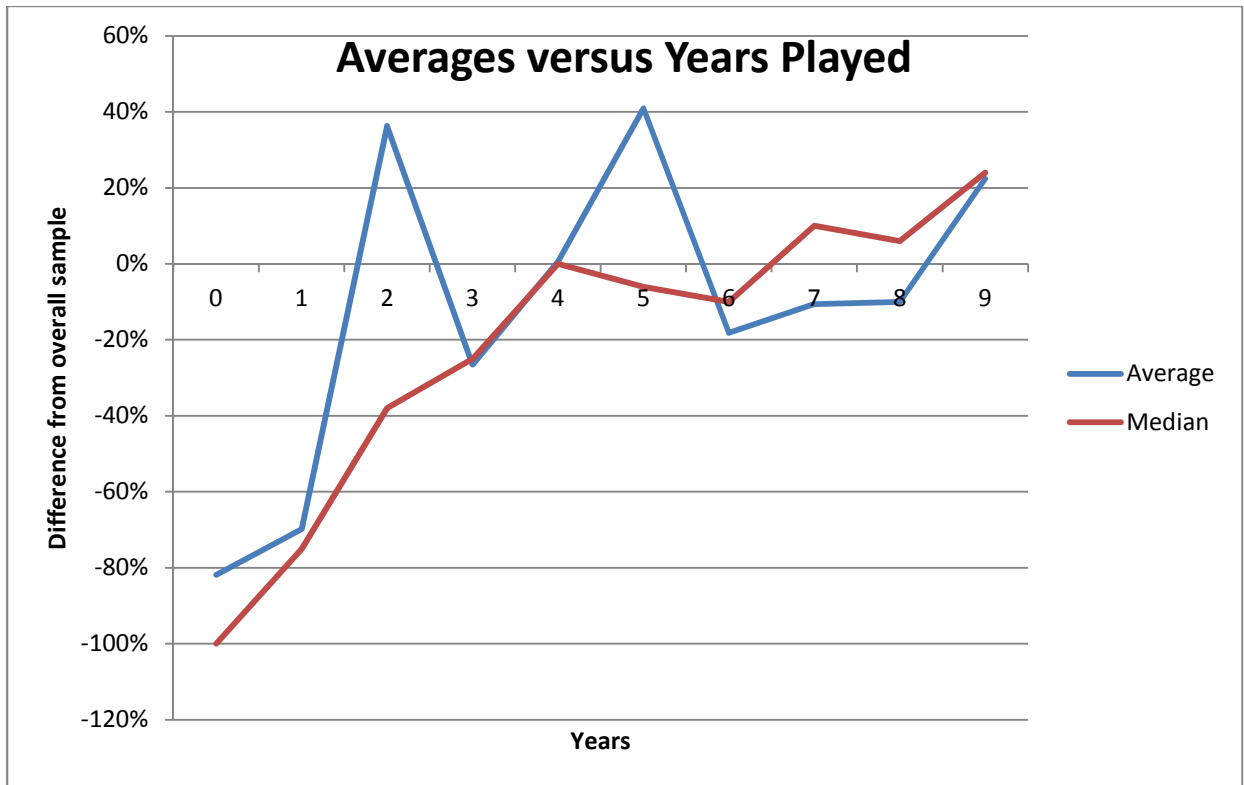
Years Played	Count	Average	Median
0	14 (0.4%)	85,895	0
1	137 (3.5%)	142,859	25,00
2	143 (3.7%)	644,732	62,024
3	231 (6.0%)	347,395	75,000
4	332 (8.6%)	475,708	100,000
5	550 (14.2%)	666,640	93,929
6	576 (14.9%)	387,042	90,000
7	627 (16.2%)	422,604	110,000
8	689 (17.8%)	425,546	106,000
9	579 (14.9%)	579,095	124,018

The distribution of years played roughly matches the distribution from the 2012 survey, obviously time shifted by 1 year.



If this distribution holds true for the overall World of Warcraft player population, it would suggest that the game has had trouble the last 2-4 years keeping newer players in the game, but older players remained loyal. However, the way survey respondents were recruited for the survey likely had a large influence on the distribution, with players who have been playing longer more likely to frequent sites that advertised for the survey.

Comparing the years played to gold levels provided some inconsistent results. In general though, players who have played World of Warcraft longer **tended** to have more gold in their pockets.

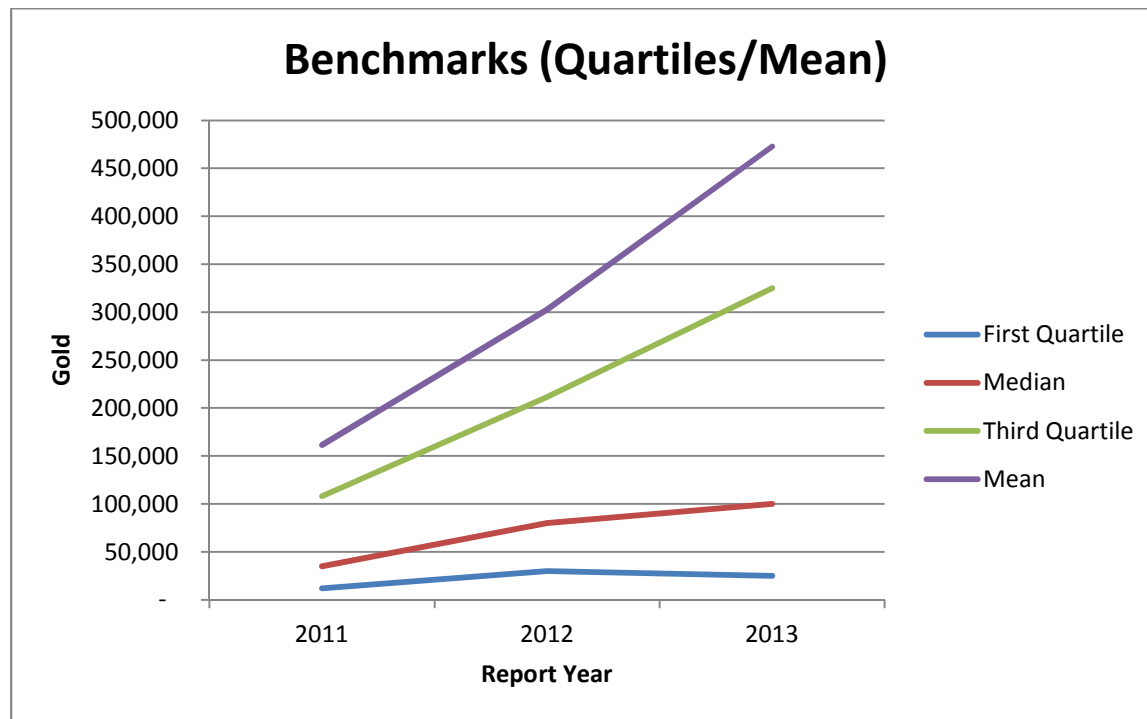


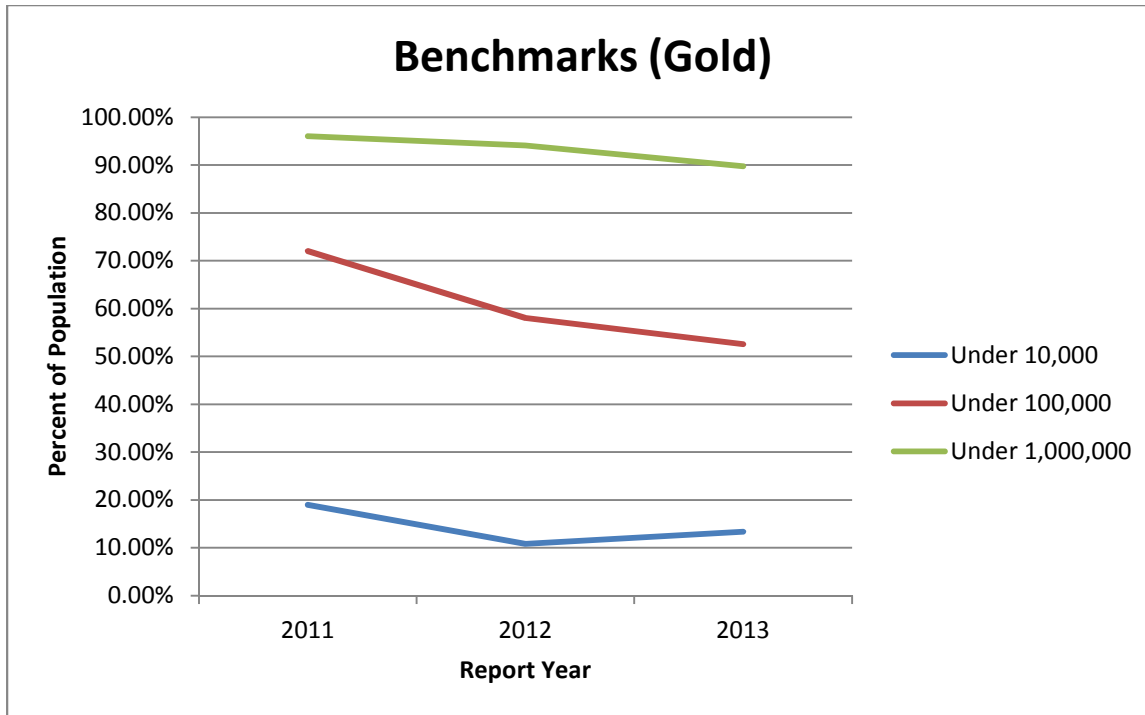
GOLD DISTRIBUTION

In previous reports a Lorenz Curve and Gini Index were used to illustrate the disparity in wealth levels for World of Warcraft players. However, these measures are best used for populations, not samples like we have here, especially biased samples, so the Gini Index and Lorenz Curve will not be included in reports going forward.

In the following table and graph various benchmarks from 2013 compared to past years.

Benchmark	2013	2012	2011
First Quartile (25%)	25,000g	30,000g	12,000g
Median (50%)	100,000g	80,000g	35,000g
Third Quartile (75%)	325,000g	211,395g	108,198g
Mean	472,979g	302,593g	161,493g
Under 10,000 gold	13.38%	10.82%	19%
Under 100,000 gold	52.53%	58.04%	72%
Under 1,000,000 gold	89.74%	94.10%	96%
Under 10,000,000 gold	99.69%	99.82%	
Under reported mean	80.79%	81.63%	82%





As expected, these benchmarks show a general trend of increasing gold levels as the game ages. While there was a slight up-tick in players reporting under 10,000 gold over the last year, the general remains a decrease in the percentage of players reporting less than 10k, 100k and 1 million gold. Additionally, while the third quartile, median, and mean gold amounts have seen increases since 2011, the first quartile gold levels dropped below the 2012 reported first quartile.

These trends seem to indicate that while the amount of gold at players disposal has increased, the disparity between the average player and the wealthy has widened.

RESOURCES

Most players rely on various resources to both exchange information on gold making ideas and for tools that will help them directly in their gold making pursuits. For the purpose of this report these will be split into information resources (such as blogs) and tools (such as add-ons).

WEBSITES

Below is a table listing all the web resources that respondents were asked about in regards to their gold making. The “Usage” column is the percentage of players in 2013 that reported using that resource, “Average (Difference)” is the average (mean) gold for players reporting using the resource (with its difference from the sample mean in parenthesis), and the “2012” and “2011” columns are the percentage of players reportedly using the resource in the corresponding year.

Resources	Usage	Average (Difference)	2012	2011
The Consortium	21%	1,124,142 (+138%)	18%	11%
Just My Two Copper	10%	835,391 (+77%)	13%	13%
MMO-Champion	18%	593,711 (+26%)	66%	69%
Gold Capped	29%	462,789 (-2%)	40%	62%
/r/WoWGoldMaking	7%	538,474 (+14%)		
/r/WoWEconomy	8%	577,797 (+22%)		
Paid Gold Guides	1%	268,159 (-43%)		
WoW Gold Making on Google+	2%	430,879 (-9%)		
Twitter	3%	894,5113 (+89%)		
Streams	6%	706,719 (+49%)		
Podcasts	7%	968,436 (+105%)		
Gold Blogs	19%	854,476 (+81%)	23%	16%
None	48%	319,995 (-32%)	18%	8%

A record 48% of respondents in 2013 reported not using any of the listed resources, up 30 percentage points from 2012 (which was up 10 percentage points from 2011). Unsurprisingly, respondents who claimed not to use any gold resources had a lower reported average than the sample average, 32% lower.

On the other end of the spectrum, users of The Consortium, Just My Two Copper, podcasts, streams, and gold blogs had the highest averages (mean) gold. Users/readers of MMO-Champion, and both reddit gold making subreddits saw moderate increases over the sample average, while Gold Capped and the WoW Gold Making community on Google+ saw minor disadvantages.

A particularly interesting result is the users of paid gold guides, who had an average gold level 43% below the sample average.

TOOLS

Since this is the first year the World of Warcraft Gold Survey asked about usage of these tools, there is no historical data. The table below outlines how many players reported using the tools, and the average gold

Tool	Usage	Average (Difference)
TradeSkillMaster	32%	1,025,521 (+117%)
Auctionator	39%	610,116 (+29%)
Auctioneer	39%	482,675 (+2%)
The Undermine Journal	39%	847,810 (+79%)
WoWuction	13%	1,336,537 (+183%)
None	22%	113,244 (-76%)

These results confirm that players need aids to be competitive, every tool gave an advantage over the sample mean, though the small gain for Auctioneer users suggest that it may be frequently used by more casual users who are not as interested in gold making.

IN-GAME ACTIVITIES

Players are also asked about what activities they partake in-game. Below is a table summarizing the participation reported in these activities.

	Raid		PvP		RP		Pet Battles	
Yes	1616	42%	465	12%	89	2%	715	18%
Casually	1811	47%	1526	39%	307	8%	1664	43%
No	451	12%	1887	49%	3482	90%	1499	39%
	Leveling		Solo		Play the AH		Farm Gold	
Yes	1234	32%	2390	62%	1207	31%	370	10%
Casually	1541	40%	1166	30%	1349	35%	976	25%
No	1103	28%	322	8%	1322	34%	2532	65%

Below is a table summarizing the various activities inquired about, what percentage of players reported participating in the activities, what the mean gold was for players reporting partaking in those activities (or not partaking) and how much their mean deviated from the sample mean.

	Raid		PvP		RP		Pet Battles	
Yes	554,685	17%	648,074	37%	175,231	-63%	517,614	9%
Casually	362,231	-23%	469,600	-1%	249,688	-47%	365,437	-23%
No	624,924	32%	432,563	-9%	500,276	6%	571,067	21%
	Leveling		Solo		Play the AH		Farm Gold	
Yes	311,866	-34%	419,883	-11%	1,068,685	126%	918,215	94%
Casually	552,568	17%	536,310	13%	302,241	-36%	400,480	-15%
No	542,033	15%	637,744	35%	103,318	-78%	435,863	-8%

As was the trend in past years, activities that tended to be more competitive attracted players with higher average gold levels. Obviously, players that devoted time to gold making, farming or playing the auction house, had more gold in their pockets.

TERMS OF SERVICE BREAKING ACTIVITIES

Starting with the 2012 survey, respondents were asked about how often they participated in activities against the Terms of Service. The table below summarizes the responses. Due to the nature of the question, respondents were given the option of “No Answer” for those uncomfortable with providing an answer. The first column under each activity is the percentage of players, the second column is the average (mean) gold, and the third column is the difference from the sample mean.

	Botting			Duping			Gold Buying		
No Answer	2.9%	266,095	-43.7%	3.2%	960,566	103.1%	3.3%	337,303	-28.7%
Never	94.2%	467,428	-1.2%	96.5%	456,859	-3.4%	92.3%	493,661	4.4%
A Few Times a Year	1.4%	461,213	-2.5%	0.1%	662,500	40.1%	4.2%	136,202	-71.2%
At least once a month	0.4%	687,707	45.4%	0.1%	10,006	-97.9%	0.2%	346,769	-26.7%
Daily	0.6%	2,028,485	328.9%	0.1%	15,000	-96.8%	0.1%	43,333	-90.8%
	Gold Selling			Exploits					
No Answer	3.0%	385,796	-18.4%	3.3%	371,436	-21.5%			
Never	94.4%	424,342	-10.3%	94.6%	464,644	-1.8%			
A Few Times a Year	1.8%	1,226,562	159.3%	1.7%	939,480	98.6%			
At least once a month	0.4%	6,956,419	1370.8%	0.2%	754,266	59.5%			
Daily	0.1%	1,430,000	202.3%	0.1%	3,086,000	552.5%			

The most common of the surveyed “illicit” activities this year was gold buying, a change from 2012 where botting was most common. For daily participation, botting was still the most common, with 0.6% reporting using bots on a daily basis. The players that reported having never participated in any of these actions, didn’t in general have a significantly lower gold average than those that did.

The number of players reporting “Daily” or “At least once a month” for most of the activities is unfortunately too small to draw many conclusions. However, as a general trend, most players that “cheat” tend to have higher gold amounts than the sample mean (with the exception of gold buyers).

CONCLUSION

With 3,878 usable results for 2013, this year was by no means the most successful survey to date, but with more participation than the first year (2011) this year's survey still had a strong showing. The data gathered this year was on the whole to be expected with gold averages rising a much more modest amount than in the 2012 report (the first report of the Mists of Pandaria expansion). Obviously inflation is much less drastic over the life of the expansion than immediately after a new expansion.

Thank you to all the players that participate in this survey and make it possible each year.