**Headline**

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A sedentary lifestyle can take its toll in one’s health, so while everyone was locked down in 2020, some people in Japan turned to an unlikely ally to beat inactivity amid pandemic lockdowns: a video game.

Welcome to the world of Ring Fit Adventure, where players do not complete journeys pressing joysticks while sitting idly in the living room. Instead, the game asks you to hold into the “Ring Con”, a round accessory shaped as a Pilates ring, while wearing a leg strap, both of which are designed for the game characters to move alongside you.

The game, developed by Nintendo in late 2019, shot up to popularity among Japanese citizens forced in lockdown by the spread of coronavirus in 2020. That year, sales rose over three-fold to 1.6 million from just over 490,000 a year ago as people tried to sweat it up while gyms were closed, and parks were a no-go for joggers.

**Chart 1**

According to Famitsu, a magazine that releases an annual ranking of video games in Japan, Ring Fit Adventure jumped to second place in 2020 from tenth place the previous year in terms of number of console units sold. Its rise to the top was only beaten by a new game from the popular Animal Crossing series that sold over 6.3 million copies.

Sales of Ring Fit Adventure in Japan also remained elevated— at 905,000 units— last year despite some pandemic restrictions already getting eased, a signal that not all were comfortable going out while the coronavirus was very much out there. Cases peaked again to over 97,000 in Japan in early February as the infectious Omicron variant spread.

That said, Ring Fit Adventure was not your usual frontrunner in a list typically dominated by legacy video games. In 2021, 12 Super Mario Bros. games from Nintendo entered the Top 100 selling 3.6 million units in Japan despite registering a 12% dip year-on-year. Another Nintendo classic, Pokemon, had three games in the top 15.

**Chart 2**

Japanese consumers are known as notoriously hesitant spenders on anything from food to cars, but video games are something they binge on and rooted in their culture. Popular games often started as anime, a Japanese colloquial term used to describe animated TV and film originating from the country. Beyond that, video games are also crucial dollar earners for Japan which exports their games, making it a $22-billion industry.

Apart from Nintendo games, Sony Entertainment’s PlayStation also figure every year in Famitsu rankings. Thirty-seven PS games entered the top 100 best-selling games list in 2020, but this went down to just 25 last year. Sales hit over 2 million units across its PS4 and recently released PS5 consoles, data showed.

PS’s Resident Evil franchise also typically makes it to the list, although sales had consistently gone down the past three years. Its newest release, Resident Evil Village for PS5, ranked a dismal 60th place in 2021, according to Famitsu figures. PS5 was launched at the height of pandemic in August 2020.

Whatever video game you play, one thing is for sure: they all help us cope through the hard times.