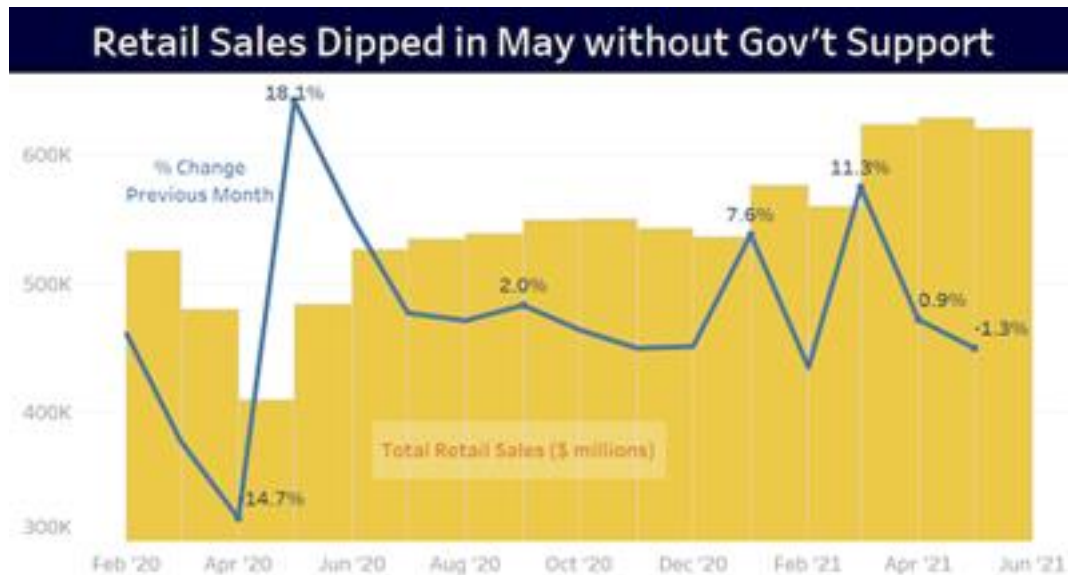


## What Do Retail Sales Data Tell Us?

Retail sales data remains on a bit of a rollercoaster because of government support.

**By the numbers:** Earlier this week, the [Census Bureau reported](#) they fell 1.3% in May after rising almost 1% in April. The \$1,400 checks and renewed extra \$300 per week unemployment benefits have boosted sales in recent months. Total retail sales are well above their pre-pandemic level.



**Digging deeper:** Given their elevated level, the decrease in May isn't all that concerning. Interestingly, there were some telling categories of sales that increased sharply amid the broad decline.

- Sales at health and personal care stores rose 1.8%, gasoline stations 0.7%, clothing and accessories stores 3%, department stores 1.6%, and food and beverage places 1.8%.

These data are consistent with a reopening economy. People are spending to go out, that includes driving to locations and buying new clothes and personal care products to go to those places. This is a strong sign of a resumption of normalcy.

**Look for this to become a trend:** People spending much more on things they haven't needed for the last 15 months and less on things they've spent amply on during the pandemic.

—Curtis Dubay, Senior Economist, U.S. Chamber of Commerce