

History shows that the road to recession recovery can be long

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The National Bureau of Economic Research has determined that economic activity in the U.S. peaked last December. This marked the end of a six-year period of economic expansion and the beginning of a recession.

The bureau is not a government agency. It is a nonprofit economic research organization. More than 1,000 professors of economics and business at U.S. universities conduct research for the bureau.

How did the bureau conclude that we are in a recession? Although the most commonly cited definition of a recession is two quarters of declining gross domestic product (GDP), the bureau considers several other factors including employment,

The recession

Week One:
Tracking recovery

personal income, retail sales and industrial production.

In fact, GDP has not declined for two consecutive quarters. However, the declines in other areas have been sufficient to meet the

bureau's definition of a recession.

How often do recessions occur and how long do they last? Since 1945, the U.S. has experienced 10 recessions, which have lasted from six to 16 months. Subsequent expansions ranged from 12 to 120 months.

The following chart includes all recessions since 1945.

A more detailed description of the bureau and an explanation of its methodology are available at www.nber.org.

Tracking recessions

Recession (duration)	Post-recession expansion (mos.)
1948 (11 mos.)	45
1953 (10 mos.)	39
1957 (8 mos.)	24
1960 (10 mos.)	106
1969 (11 mos.)	36
1973 (16 mos.)	58
1980 (6 mos.)	12
1981 (16 mos.)	92
1990 (8 mos.)	120
2001 (8 mos.)	73

Source: NBER