

National Bureau of Economic Research

The National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan research group founded in 1920. The NBER is dedicated to understanding how the economy works. And it presently consists of over 600 university professors and researchers who conduct empirical research on the economy as NBER associates.

Perhaps the most important task of the NBER is identifying and dating the peaks and troughs in the U.S. economy. Within the NBER, this task is the responsibility of the Business Cycle Dating Committee. The committee is made up of a small group of business cycle experts.

The Business Cycle Dating Committee usually considers two consecutive quarters to be a recession. However, this rule of thumb is not followed blindly. Sometimes the committee will consider a period to be recessionary even though it did not technically satisfy this rough definition of a recession.