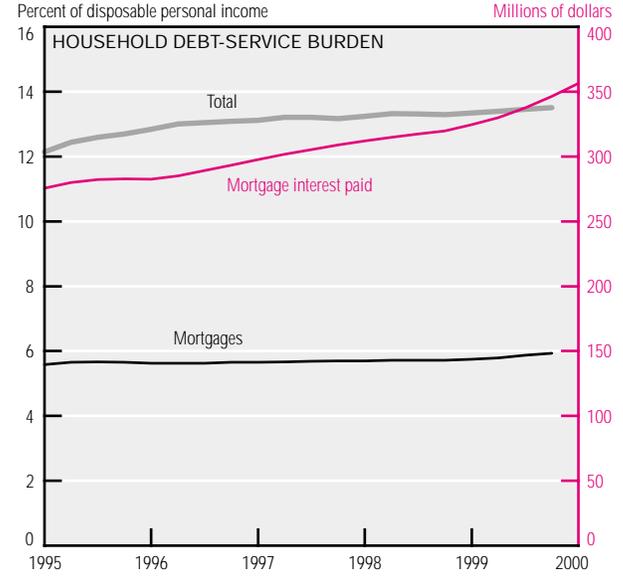
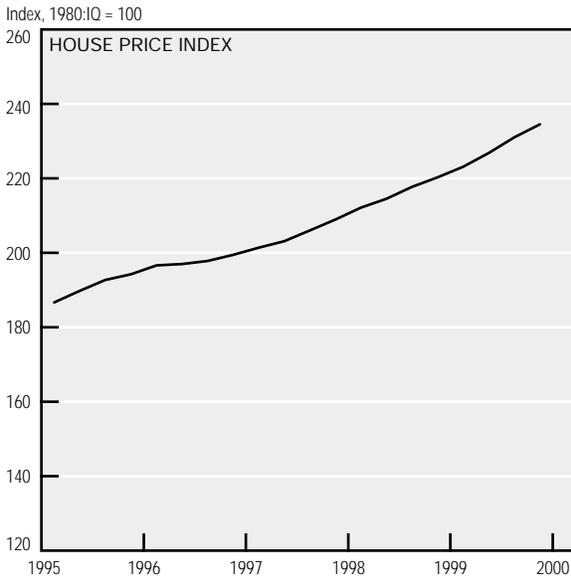
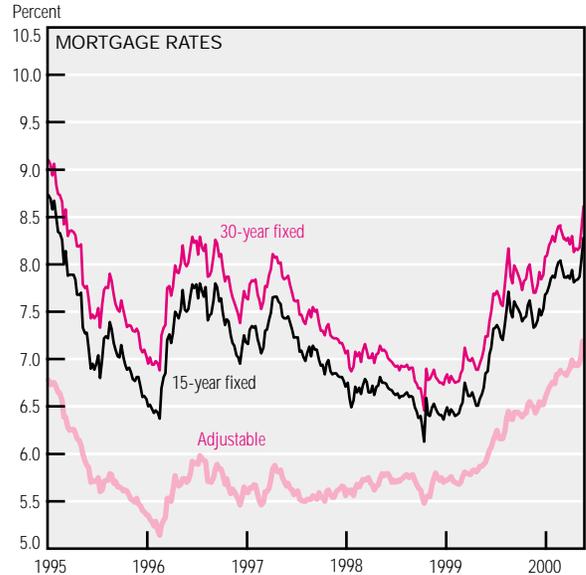
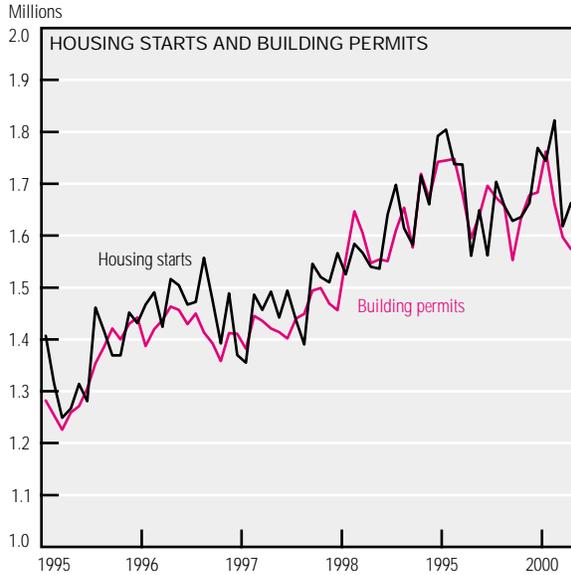


# Housing Conditions



SOURCES: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census and Bureau of Economic Analysis; and Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System.

Total housing starts rebounded moderately in April, increasing 2.8% to 1.66 million units annually. Most of the rebound came from starts of multifamily housing; single-family starts increased only slightly. Multifamily starts have become more volatile this year compared to the same period a year ago: In April they rose 14%, following on the heels of a 40% decline in March. Overall, housing starts have

softened since January, when the annual rate stood at 1.74 million units. Total building permits fell slightly in April to 1.57 million units annually, a small decline from the previous month but a more significant 10.7% decline since the beginning of the year.

Despite upward-trending fixed- and variable-rate home mortgage interest rates and increases in the average price of new homes since the

beginning of 2000, new home sales continue to rise, with a 4.5% increase in March.

The relative share of mortgage payments out of total household debt service in 1999:IVQ was 44%. Although total household mortgage interest payments increased significantly in the last half of the 1990s, this percentage remained roughly constant.