By The Associated Press

There were 12,381 babies born to teen-agers in Louisiana in 1988, representing a 23 percent decline since 1970, according to statistics released recently by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation in Michigan.

But the news on the teen-age pregnancy front wasn’t all good. Statistics also showed that one out of three first-time mothers in Louisiana in 1988 was a teen-ager, giving the state its traditional ranking of third in the nation. And a quarter of the teen-age mothers were having their second or third babies. The number of non-marital births to teen-agers soared between 1970 and 1988, increasing by 64 percent.

“The decline in teen births is encouraging. It means we have begun to address the issue,” said Terri Bartlett, executive director of Planned Parenthood of Louisiana.

“But Louisiana’s rank has not changed in years, which means that other states have done a better job than we have,” she said.

“And a 64 percent rise in non-marital births is amazing. It’s overwhelming. That’s a lot of teen-agers. Where are the fathers? Where are they?” Bartlett asked.

In Louisiana’s cities, especially in New Orleans, births to unmarried teen-agers are particularly high. Out of 1,814 teen-age girls who gave birth in 1988 in New Orleans, only 173 of them were married. About one in five births in the city is to a teen-ager.

One of the reasons for the state’s high teen birth rate is that Louisiana teen-agers are less likely than others to have abortions. The state ranked 43rd in that regard, with about one out of five teen-agers ending her pregnancy with an abortion.