**REPORT: State ranked 49th**

Kids Count says. The national rate worsened by 22 percent.
The state rankings as high as 19th in one area: The juvenile custody rate. As measured by the number of kids 10-18 in the justice system, Louisiana's rate increased by 24 percent to 122 per 100,000. The national rate increased by about 10 percent.

In other Louisiana categories in the Kids Count study:
* Efforts to reduce infant and child mortality made a difference in the 1980s, although the state still ranks low in both categories. Infant deaths per 1,000 live births dropped from 14.3 to 11.4. The number of deaths per 100,000 children ages 1-14 fell from 50.7 to 39.
* More babies — 9.1 percent in 1989, compared to 8.6 percent in 1980 — had birth weights of less than 5½ pounds. Low birth weight is often linked to teen pregnancy and inadequate prenatal care.
* The state's high school graduation rate improved here by 12 percent. A little less than 60 percent of those who entered high school receive degrees. But Louisiana still ranks 49th in the nation.

Violent deaths among teens increased by 7 percent between 1985 and 1988.
The South and Southwest generally fared worse than the rest of the country in the Kids Count study. Arkansas, Arizona, New Mexico and the Deep South make up the 12 lowest-ranking states.
The top rankings generally went to rural Northeastern, Midwestern and Western states. The top five are North Dakota, New Hampshire, Utah, Vermont and Minnesota.