The Pampers® Baby Report

The Village Barometer

What's more beautiful, challenging, emotional and rewarding than the first 1,000 days with a baby?

It is a period of incredible transformation, when a baby's world expands every day, when every small step feels like a giant leap, when every smile brings a world of joy... and when every beautiful milestone can also bring a thousand new questions.

Where do parents turn when those questions arise, whether at 3pm or 3am, in the middle of another sleepless night?

As a mom of two, I have experienced it firsthand: **it takes a village to raise a child, and perhaps that has never felt more true than today.** Information has never been so abundant, and advice comes from more sources than ever, from the family paediatrician and well-intentioned grandparents to trusted content creators sharing the realities of parenting. A baby's Village has never been so rich or diverse.

Yet this evolving environment can also bring uncertainty, exhaustion, conflicting advice and moments when parents wonder whether they are doing enough, or what is truly the best way to help their baby grow happy and healthy.

At Pampers, we have stood alongside babies and their families for more than 60 years. We have seen the Village evolve as new generations of parents came in. Throughout that time, one thing has remained constant: babies thrive when the people caring for them feel supported, informed and confident - when their Village feels strong.
That belief is the inspiration behind the **Pampers Baby Report: The Village Barometer.**

Through extensive research across Europe with thousands of parents and with hundreds of paediatricians, together with trusted partners, we set out to explore a simple but important question: **How supported do parents really feel during their baby's first 1,000 days?**

What we found is both encouraging and thought-provoking.

Many parents describe having a Village around them. Yet that support does not always translate into something they can rely on day to day. Many are navigating loneliness, fatigue, information overload and self-doubt. The Village is there, but it is often uneven.

At Pampers, we believe that listening to families and understanding their realities is essential if we are to support them in meaningful ways. It is part of our long-standing commitment to give every baby our very best, every day.

With this report, we want to better understand the world surrounding families and the conditions that can help babies and parents thrive.

Because babies do not need perfect parents. They need loving, responsive caregivers who themselves feel supported, connected and confident, and who have the space to rest, recover and enjoy those precious everyday moments together, so babies can focus on what they do best: love, sleep, play.

My hope is that the insights in this report spark conversation, inspire action and deepen our collective understanding of what families need today. Most of all, I hope they remind every parent that they are not alone. Behind every baby is a Village. And together, we can make that Village stronger, more supportive and more responsive, so that every baby has the best possible start in life.

That is our commitment at Pampers: to be part of that Village, every step of the way.

Federica Pompei
Senior Vice President, Baby Care Europe





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01

Executive Summary

The Pampers Baby Report Village Barometer is a new way to understand the support around babies in their first 1,000 days.

Built from a major Europe-wide research programme conducted by Ipsos in April 2026, with **4,339 parents** and **425 paediatricians** across **nine European countries,** and informed by further statistical review conducted by UNICEF's Office of Strategy and Evidence – Innocenti, it brings together 15 indicators across five support conditions around babies: Connection and Support, Confidence and Clarity, Rest and Recovery, Play and Bonding, and Baby-Friendly Futures.[1,2]



58/100

Based on this research, the 2026 Village Barometer result for **support around babies** is 58 out of 100.

This score is an average of the 5 pillars of the Village. Further information on the approach and methodology can be found on page 24.

That result is a starting point rather than a verdict, and its value comes from the picture it opens up across all five pillars. It shows a village that is there, but uneven. Many parents feel supported, many often or always feel happy and confident as parents, and many recognise babies' needs in the first 1,000 days. At the same time, many are navigating loneliness, tiredness, information overload, pressure around play and milestones, and doubts about whether everyday life has been designed with babies in mind.[1]

The report looks at the conditions around babies and asks whether parents and the wider village have the confidence, clarity, rest, connection and practical support that can make responsive everyday care easier. Rather than judging parents, ranking families or measuring baby development directly, it offers an informed, data-based and kind picture of babies and their parents in Europe today, created to help understand the support systems around them and where further support may be needed.

Its message is hopeful and practical. Babies do not need perfect parents or perfect homes. They need warm, responsive care, supported moments of connection and a village that helps the people around them feel less alone, less judged and better able to respond.

Strengthening that village means making trusted guidance easier to find, helping families support rest, finding ways to support development through play and making sure babies are considered in the places, services, products and decisions that shape family life.

Rather than asking parents to do more, the Barometer asks what the village can do better.





02

The first 1,000 days need a village

A baby's first 1,000 days are a period of rapid growth, beautiful learning, ongoing discovery and strong connection. From pregnancy through the first two years, babies are developing foundations for later physical health, communication, relationships and cognitive development. The phrase 'the first 1,000 days' is widely used across academic and policy literature, and research has looked at this period from several angles, from pregnancy into early childhood, early neurodevelopment and the nurturing care that surrounds young children.[3,4,5,6]

Put simply, once a baby's primary needs are being met, this report keeps returning to three everyday needs parents know well: love, sleep and play. Babies need loving, consistent caregivers, peaceful chances to rest, and playful moments that help them explore the world and feel close to the people around them.



That evidence should encourage support and not pressure. The first 1,000 days are an important foundation, while still giving parents room to be human rather than optimise every moment or get everything right. Babies do not need a perfect home, a perfect routine or constant stimulation. They need good-enough, consistent and responsive care within a healthy, safe and nurturing environment, and they need the adults around them to have enough support to notice, respond and recover.

The first 1,000 days are an important foundation for child health and development, but they should not be a source of pressure for parents. Babies need nurturing, responsive care and early stimulation in a safe and supportive environment to thrive.

— Chemba Raghavan, Global Lead, Early Childhood Development, UNICEF

This is why a baby-first report cannot only ask what parents are doing. It also needs to ask what surrounds them. Babies experience the world through the people who hold, feed, change, comfort, play with and respond to them, and those people are shaped by their own support: whether they feel rested enough to cope, especially when a full night's sleep feels like a distant memory; confident enough to trust themselves; clear enough to navigate advice; and connected enough to ask for help before worries grow heavier.

The word "village" helps make this support environment visible. A village is not only grandparents or neighbours, and it is not a nostalgic idea of family life. Today's village includes parents, partners, relatives, friends, healthcare professionals, childcare settings, communities, digital tools, brands, workplaces, public spaces and wider systems. Some parts of that village are close and human. Some are professional. Some are digital. Some are practical, such as a changing space that works, a product that reduces avoidable disruption, or guidance that is simple enough to use at 3am.

The Village Barometer uses our research to look at the support conditions parents describe around babies in a European context. It starts from a simple idea: babies grow through care, and care is easier to give when the people around babies are supported. That is why the Barometer looks beyond individual parenting behaviours to the wider conditions that shape everyday care, including connection, confidence, rest, play and the way daily life is organised around babies.[8]



Babies do not develop in isolation. They grow through repeated, responsive interactions with the people around them, and those interactions occur more naturally and more easily when caregivers are supported, confident and able to respond.

— Natasha Kirkham, Professor of Developmental Psychology, Birbeck, University of London

Harvard's Center on the Developing Child describes 'serve and return' as the responsive back-and-forth between a young child and a caring adult, a pattern that helps build brain architecture, language and social skills. In the everyday life of a baby, that can look very small: a sound answered, a smile returned, a wriggle noticed, a song repeated. The science is significant, but the action is often beautifully ordinary.[10]

The Village Barometer has been created to describe the environment around those ordinary moments. It brings parent and healthcare professional evidence into a first dashboard of support conditions, showing how the village around babies feels today and where everyday support could be strengthened. That makes the Barometer a starting point for a constructive conversation: not what more should parents do, but what could the village do better?





03

How the village around babies has changed



Every baby begins life by reaching out. A look, a cry, a wriggle, a smile, a hand opening and closing around a finger. Long before a baby has words, they are already asking the world around them to notice, respond and come close.

For generations, that response has never come from parents alone. Babies have always grown within a village, made up of the people, routines, places, advice and everyday care that surround a family. Today, that village is still there, but it looks and feels different. Families may live further from relatives, work and childcare patterns can be harder to balance, healthcare systems can feel stretched and advice is everywhere, especially online.[7,11,12,13]

6 in 10 parents feel **supported** overall

Total base (parents) **n=4339** (59%)

In our research, most parents believe they have a village and **six in ten feel supported overall.** That is a reassuring starting point because it shows that many babies are surrounded by people who care. The picture is uneven, however. Parents' perceived village is bigger than the support they experience in reality: the average expected village includes **3.4 types of support, compared with 2.8 in real life.** Neighbours, community groups and healthcare professionals are all less present in the real village than parents expect, while many parents rely heavily on themselves, their partner and immediate family.[1]

Total base (parents) **n=4339**

The role of digital support in today's village

Digital support is now part of family life. It can provide reassurance, peer solidarity and quick access to ideas, especially when a parent is awake in the night or looking for a simple answer. It can also add noise when parents meet too many sources, conflicting advice or unclear trust signals. A stronger village treats digital support as one layer of help, connected to human and professional support rather than replacing it.

Q5: When you hear the phrase "It takes a village to raise a child", what does 'the village' mean to you?
Q6: Who currently forms part of your baby's support network ("village")?
Q13: How supported do you feel overall in raising your baby?

The changed village also means the Barometer should be read as a picture of support conditions. It is about where babies and parents already feel held by the village, and where everyday support could feel warmer, clearer and easier to reach.

Parents do not raise children in isolation. Policies, services, and support systems shape the conditions that enable parents to provide nurturing care to their young children.

— Chemba Raghavan, Global Lead, Early Childhood Development, UNICEF

Family structure should also be handled with care, because babies can be surrounded by love, connection and responsive care in many different family shapes. What helps is the presence of support that reaches parents before they feel alone, overburdened or unsure where to turn, whatever shape their family takes.

That is the role of the Pampers Baby Report Village Barometer: to look at the conditions around babies in their first 1,000 days, and to understand where the modern village feels strong, where it feels stretched and where families need more confidence, care and reassurance.



04

How the Baby Village Barometer works

The Village Barometer is based on a Europe-wide survey conducted by Ipsos in April 2026, listening to 4,339 parents and 425 paediatricians across nine countries about what babies need, how families are supported and where the modern village feels strong or stretched. The findings were reviewed alongside statistical analysis, looking across indicators such as support, happiness, confidence, sleep, play, information, loneliness and future worries.[1,2]

4,339
parents

425
paediatricians

9
countries

The survey was conducted by Ipsos in April 2026 asking about support, happiness, confidence, sleep, play, information, loneliness, digital support, future worries and perceptions of the village around babies. The Barometer uses 15 selected survey indicators, reviewed alongside statistical analysis, to create a high-level picture of support conditions around babies. It is designed as a descriptive dashboard, not as a clinical measure of child development, a judgement of parents or a country ranking.



Those indicators were grouped into five pillars. Each pillar shows a different part of the support environment around babies in their first 1,000 days. Some indicators are positive, such as whether parents feel supported, happy or confident. Others are pressure indicators, such as loneliness, tiredness, information overwhelm or worry about the future. To make the reading simple, every indicator is converted so that a higher score always means a stronger support condition around the baby. The pillar readings should be understood as a descriptive view of each support condition, rather than as a statistical ranking between pillars. Future waves of this research may refine or deepen individual indicators, but this first reading gives the village a clear baseline from which to learn.

For example, if 65% of parents say they have a village, that contributes 65 to the Connection and Support pillar. If 44% of parents say they feel lonely at least sometimes, the positive score becomes 56, because 56% are not reporting loneliness at that level. The Barometer then averages the indicators within each pillar, and the five pillar scores create the overall reading.

65%

parents say they have a village
=
65 to the Connection & Support pillar

44%

parents say they feel lonely
=
56 to the positive score

Across Europe, the research gives the 2026 Baby's Village an overall Barometer score of 58 out of 100.

Pillar	Score /100	What it tells us	Main tension
Connection & Support	60	Many parents feel supported or say they have a village.	Support is not reaching everyone equally.
Confidence & Clarity	71	Most parents often or always feel happy and confident, but guidance can still feel noisy.	Information should reassure, not overwhelm.
Rest & Recovery	53	Sleep disruption and tiredness are common, and rest is part of the care environment.	Families need help supporting recovery as well as routines.
Play & Bonding	48	Parents value play, while time, pressure and confidence shape the support conditions around it.	Everyday play should feel like connection, not performance.
Baby-Friendly Futures	56	Parents are thinking beyond daily care to the world their baby will grow into.	Systems, spaces and services need to feel more designed around babies.

Total base (parents) **n=4339**

Based on the average of the 5 pillars of the Village, the score reads 58/100. The value is less about any single number than about the picture the Barometer helps us see. Like a dashboard, it is most useful when the five support conditions are read together, showing where the village already helps parents and babies, and where the conditions around everyday care can be strengthened. The pillar readings help structure the story, but they should not be read as a league table of which areas are statistically stronger or weaker than others.



The Village Stories

The country stories in this report are not a ranking of places to have a baby, or a judgement on parents in one country compared with another. They show how different parts of the village feel across Europe: where support appears more visible, where pressure feels sharper, and where everyday life may feel more, or less, designed around babies.



A barometer is useful because it brings structure to diverse evidence. The key is to treat it as a picture of support conditions at this point in time, not as a causal index or a ranking of parents or families.

— Gwyther Rees,
UNICEF Office of Strategy and Evidence - Innocenti



05

Connection & Support:

the people who help babies feel held

60/100
Connection and Support score

65%
Parents say they have a village

60%
Parents feel supported overall

44%
Parents feel lonely at least sometimes

Total base (parents) **n=4339**

A baby does not experience support as a network diagram or a list of services. A baby feels it in the steadiness of the person holding them, the extra pair of hands that lets a parent rest, the grandparent or neighbour who brings food, the friend who listens without judgement and the healthcare professional who gives advice that feels clear and kind.

Connection and Support has a reading of 60 out of 100 in the Village Barometer. Most parents say they have a village, and six in ten feel supported overall. That is an encouraging starting point because it shows that the village is still there, in family, friends, partners, communities, professionals and, for some parents, digital spaces too.[1]

The same pillar also shows why connection cannot be taken for granted. Forty-four per cent of parents say they feel lonely at least sometimes, and loneliness is different from simply being alone. Research on perinatal loneliness describes it as a subjective gap between the connection a parent has and the connection they need. A parent can have people around them and still feel unsupported if those relationships do not feel emotionally safe, useful or close enough.[1,14]

Q13: How supported do you feel overall in raising your baby?
Q7: Overall, do you feel you have a "village" supporting you in raising your baby? Feel lonely : sometimes + often + always
Q2: Thinking about the past month, how often have you experienced the following feelings?



Village story: where support feels close or stretched
In Italy, the village appears more visible, with **74%** of parents saying they have a village that supports them, compared with **65%** overall. In France, **52%** say they have a village, while the United Kingdom shows a different pressure point: **53%** of parents feel lonely at least sometimes. Across all three countries, it is not about how much parents care, but how close support feels when they need it.

Total parent base : n=4339
Total parent base in **Italy** : n=570
Total parent base in **France** : n=500
Total parent base in **UK** : n=500

The strength of the village seems to come from layers of support. Parents who can draw on family and community support appear more likely to feel supported and more likely to say they have a village than parents relying mainly on themselves or their partner. Digital support can help, especially for parents who have fewer other sources of support, but its value depends on the quality of the guidance, solidarity and reassurance it provides.[1,11]

This is also where healthcare professionals and community services can become part of the wider support system. Evidence from early childhood education and care settings suggests that parents value support that is approachable, responsive and able to act as a bridge between home and services, which fits closely with what families often need in the first 1,000 days: not a distant expert, but a steady route to reassurance and practical help.[24]



Caregiver support is baby-relevant because babies experience that support through the consistency, responsiveness and emotional availability of the adults around them.

— Natasha Kirkham, Professor of Developmental Psychology, Birbeck, University of London



A stronger support village is therefore not simply a bigger village. It is responsive, trusted and close enough to help before parents reach crisis point. It gives practical help, emotional reassurance and trusted guidance, and it recognises that supporting parents is one of the ways the wider village supports babies.

What a stronger support village looks like

Make it close
Support should feel emotionally available, not only theoretically present. Parents need people they can speak to honestly, without feeling judged, corrected or dismissed.

Make it practical
A stronger village helps with the ordinary pressures around baby care, from meals, errands and appointments to rest, childcare and time to recover.

Make it kind
The most helpful support strengthens parents' confidence. It listens before advising and recognises that babies can be loved and cared for in many different family shapes.

When the village supports the people caring for a baby, it helps make space for the closeness babies feel in the smallest moments: a calm voice, a returned smile, a cuddle when they need it and someone steady enough to respond.



06

Confidence & Clarity:

when too much information can shake parents' confidence

71/100
Confidence and Clarity score

85%
Often or always happy as a parent

71%
Often or always feel confident in my parenting

42%
Overwhelmed by parenting information

Total base (parents) **n=4339** Q2 Q44

Every parent knows the feeling of wondering whether they are doing it right. Is baby feeding enough, sleeping enough, playing enough, crying too much or developing as expected? In the first 1,000 days, questions can arrive faster than answers, and advice can come from everywhere at once.

95% paediatricians **agree** too many sources overwhelm parents

Total HCP **n=425** Q5.

The Confidence and Clarity pillar has a reading of 71 out of 100. Many parents often or always feel happy and confident as parents, which is a positive starting point. At the same time, confidence is not always steady. Parents may feel able to support their baby and trust themselves in the small everyday acts of care, while still being shaken by too much information, conflicting advice or a sense that there is always one more thing a good parent should know.[1]

In our research, 42% of parents say they feel overwhelmed by the amount of parenting information available, and the wider data show how easily a helpful search for reassurance can become another source of pressure. Healthcare professionals see the same pattern from the other side: 95% of paediatricians agree that having access to too many sources of advice can overwhelm parents. That helps explain why reassurance and trust are just as important as the information itself.[1]

Village story: where parents need clearer signals
Germany shows how noisy the advice environment can feel, with **55%** of parents overwhelmed by the amount of parenting information available, compared with **42%** overall. Sweden sits lower on this measure, at **35%.** For parents trying to do the best for their baby, clear and trusted guidance can feel like part of the village too.

Total parent base : n=4339
Total parent base in **Germany** : n=500
Total parent base in **Sweden** : n=400

Academic research on parental self-efficacy, or feeling confident in parenting choices, and information overload strengthens this part of the story. It suggests that parents who feel less confident or overloaded may search more online, which can create a loop where more searching leads to more information and more pressure to sort through it.[15]

Parents have an abundance of information. What they also need is guidance they can trust, delivered in a way that builds confidence rather than adding worry. Evidence on online parenting programmes suggests that digital support can improve some outcomes, including self-efficacy and social support, especially around the time programmes are used, but it is not a complete answer on its own.[12]



Signal, not noise

A clearer village helps parents tell the difference between useful guidance and information overload. That means simple language, trusted sources, practical reassurance and a clear route to human or professional support when parents need more than a quick answer.

Confidence should also be understood as relational rather than simply informational. Responsive care depends on an adult being able to notice, interpret and respond to a baby's cues. Confidence and clarity can help create the conditions for that responsiveness by reducing noise around ordinary decisions and making parents feel able to ask questions before worries become heavier. This is another place where the village can help: by offering greater clarity.[8,10,15]

The best guidance does not make parents feel that there is always more they should be doing. It helps them trust the responsive care they are already giving and know where to turn when they need more support.

— Natasha Kirkham, Professor of Developmental Psychology, Birbeck, University of London

What clearer support looks like

Make it simple

Parents need guidance that is easy to understand, easy to return to and clear enough to use in the middle of real family life.

Make it trusted

A stronger village helps parents find reliable sources, from healthcare professionals and evidence-based guidance to reassuring support from people they know.

Make it confidence-building

The aim is not to give parents more to worry about. It is to help them read their baby, ask questions and respond with growing confidence.

When the village makes guidance clearer, it gives parents more room to notice their baby rather than second-guess themselves, and that confidence can make everyday care feel gentler for everyone.





07

Rest & Recovery:

helping families through the nights that shape the days

53/100
Rest and Recovery score

54%
Parents often or always feel tired

47%
Sleep interrupted often or every night

40%
Sleep affects mood and energy a lot or extremely

Total base (parents) **n=4339**

Many parents will know that sleep is one of the biggest, and not always gentlest, surprises of early parenthood. It changes the rhythm of the night, the shape of the day and the patience parents have left by the time bedtime comes round again. Newborn sleep is different from adult sleep, and in the earliest weeks babies can sometimes seem more awake at night than during the day. Frequent waking is a normal part of baby development, and our research shows that 28% of parents say their baby still does not sleep through the night. Knowing that this can be normal does not make tiredness any easier.



Parents report **losing** an average of **5.5hrs** of **sleep** per week since having a child

Total base (parents) **n=4339**
5.5 hours lost sleep stat was calculated by: Mean calculated using values on answer scale: Less than 2 hours (1), 2-4 hours (3), 4–5 hours (4.5), 6–7 hours (6.5), 8+ hours (10).

The Rest and Recovery pillar has a reading of 53 out of 100, pointing to a support condition where many families feel pressure. More than half of parents often or always feel tired, almost half say their sleep is interrupted often or every night, and four in ten say interrupted sleep affects their mood and energy a lot or extremely. Parents report losing an average of 5.5 hours of sleep per week since having a child, rising to 5.7 hours among women.[1]

Women base (parents) **n=3084** Q18

The findings in this chapter cannot promise parents a perfect night's sleep. Babies wake for many necessary reasons, including hunger, comfort, illness, teething and their own developing sleep rhythms. The Pampers Sleep Science Guide explains that babies have shorter sleep cycles than adults, that night waking is natural, and that little by little babies begin to develop a rhythm that looks more like the family around them. Our own research also shows how varied this journey is: 9% of parents say their baby slept through the night before three months, while 28% say their baby still does not sleep through.[16]

9% parents say their baby **slept through** night before 3 months

23% parents of babies aged 1-3 years old still don't sleep through the night

TOTAL base (parents) baby 0-3y.o n= 4339
Baby 0-1y.o n=1331 (39%) Baby 1-3y.o n=3008 (23%) Q22

The same guide draws a useful distinction between necessary wake-ups and avoidable disruption. When a baby wakes because they are wet, uncomfortable or disturbed by a leak, the whole family can lose rest that might otherwise have been possible. In this context, dryness and comfort are not presented as a promise of uninterrupted sleep; they are practical parts of night-time care that can help reduce avoidable wake-ups and support calmer nights where possible.[16]

Village story: where rest tells a more nuanced story

The United Kingdom has the highest level of frequent sleep interruption, at **54%** compared with **47%** overall. Romania has one of the lowest readings for frequent interruption, at **41%,** but the highest level of baby sleep affecting parents' mood and energy, at **49%.** Rest pressure can show up in different ways, but the need for reassurance and recovery is shared across Europe.

Total parent base : n=4339
Total parent base in **UK** : n=500
Total parent base in **Romania** : n=500

Academic research on maternal sleep and parenting quality suggests that irregular or poor parental sleep can be associated with lower emotional availability during bedtime care. A further longitudinal study links variable or poor maternal sleep with infant-mother attachment security through bedtime parenting quality. This should be understood as evidence about patterns over time, not as a claim that one difficult night or one wake-up affects a baby's bond with their parent.[17,18]

The most helpful sleep message is not that families should fix baby sleep. It is that fragmented baby sleep is normal, and the village can still help with recovery, reassurance and practical comfort around it.

— Natasha Kirkham, Professor of Developmental Psychology, Birbeck, University of London

What a stronger rest village looks like

Make it normal

Parents need reassurance that babies wake for many ordinary reasons, especially in the early months when sleep cycles are short and rhythms are still developing.

Make rest possible

The village can help families create calmer routines, support chances to rest and reduce avoidable wake-ups linked to wetness, discomfort or leaks.

Make it shared

Rest becomes easier to support when partners, family members and supporters respond to tiredness with practical help, not judgement.

When the village supports rest, it helps make the night feel less lonely and gives babies and parents a little more space for the closeness, comfort and calm that carry them into the next day.





08

Play & Bonding:

making space for everyday moments of connection

Pampers | LEGO duplo

Co-authored with LEGO Duplo



48/100
Play and Bonding score

84%
Parents say early play is very or extremely important

Almost 9 in 10
Parents report at least one barrier to play

7 in 10
Parents experience at least one pressure around play

Total base (parents) **n=4339** Q27 Q33 Q31

There is something magical about watching a baby discover the world. A hand reaching out. A smile returned. A curious exploration of communication through babbling. To a grown-up, these can look like tiny moments. To a baby, they are busy workouts for the brain, the body and the bond they are building with the people around them.

The science supports the instinct parents already have. Harvard's Center on the Developing Child describes serve and return as responsive back-and-forth interaction between a young child and a caring adult. The American Academy of Pediatrics also describes play as a route through which children build social-emotional, cognitive, language and self-regulation skills, and highlights a role for paediatricians in encouraging playful learning.[10,19]

Play also changes quickly across the first 1,000 days. The shared look, copied sound or peek-a-boo moment that delights a young baby gradually becomes more active, imaginative and exploratory as a toddler grows. The form changes, but the heart of play remains the same: a baby or young child notices the world, tries something out and finds someone there to notice and respond with them.

That is why play sits at the heart of the Village Barometer as one of the everyday ways babies connect, learn and feel close to the people who love them, rather than another thing for parents to get right or a chore to schedule in the day. Our research shows that parents already understand this: 84% say early play is very or extremely important for their baby's development. At the same time, almost 9 in 10 parents report at least one barrier to play, showing why support around play matters as much as belief in its importance.[1]

The Play and Bonding pillar has a reading of 48 out of 100. The reading should be understood as a picture of the support conditions around play, especially where time, mental space, uncertainty and guilt make play feel harder than it should. Many parents feel confident supporting their baby's development through play, but around one in three do not, which is why simple, reassuring ideas can help.[1]

84% say early play is very or extremely **important**

Village story: where play feels confident or squeezed

Germany stands out for play confidence, with **83%** of parents confident supporting development through play, compared with **64%** overall. Time tells another story: **64%** of parents in Romania say they have enough time for meaningful play, compared with **43%** in France. These differences show why families need space, encouragement and permission to enjoy simple moments of connection.

Total parent base : n=4339 Total parent base in **Germany** : n=500 Total parent base in **Romania** : n=500 Total parent base in **France** : n=500

The difficulty is that play can start to feel like performance. Seven out of ten parents experience at least one pressure or judgement around play. Four in ten have felt guilty about not playing enough or not playing correctly, and around one in four have felt unsure whether they are playing in a beneficial way. The tension is understandable: the more parents understand the benefits of play, the more sharply they may feel the gap between what they want to give and what daily life allows.[1,21]

Research from the LEGO Group helps bring this story into focus. It points out that play needs head space as well as time, and that the ordinary distractions of modern life, including chores, notifications, phone calls and digital habits, can make it difficult for parents to feel fully present even when they are physically with their baby.[21]

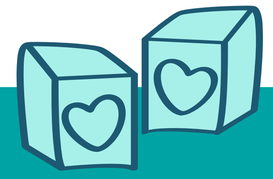
The LEGO Group's Play Well Study, based on parents of children aged 1 to 12, also points to the family value of play beyond the baby years. In that study, nine in ten parents agreed that playing as a family facilitates better communication between them and their child and helps their child make sense of the world. Among parents of children aged 1 to 5, those figures remained very high, at 93% and 92% respectively.[26]

9 in 10 **agree** playing as a family facitilates better communication

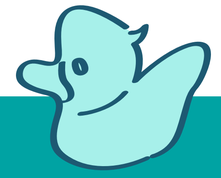
Those figures remained **very high** **at 92-93%** for parents of children aged **1 to 5**

The same study suggests that family play does not need to take over the week to be meaningful. Wider LEGO Play Well research describes five hours of family play a week as a positive tipping point for family happiness and wellbeing, based on comparisons with families playing for under two hours. Because that evidence comes from wider family research, rather than a baby-only study, it should be read as supportive context rather than a new target for parents in the first 1,000 days. The useful message is not that every family must reach a fixed number of hours, but that regular, achievable moments of play can help family life feel more connected.[26]





Play gets interrupted
Many parents are playing with their baby every day, but play rarely happens in a perfect pocket of dedicated quiet time. It sits alongside chores, notifications, siblings, work messages and everything else that needs doing. A stronger play village recognises that interrupted play can still be loving, responsive and valuable.



Play is so many different things
Without a clear sense of what "good" play looks like, parents can feel pressure to create special activities or set aside extra time they may not have. It can help to see play as an attitude and approach that can be woven through many ordinary moments: book time, bath time, getting dressed, cooking nearby, walking to childcare, a nappy change or a shared silly sound.



Village story: where play feels pressured
Greece offers a useful counterpoint on play pressure, with parents among the least likely to feel guilty about not playing enough or not playing correctly. UK parents are among the most likely to feel this guilt. The contrast reinforces the report's message that play should feel like connection with a baby, not another performance measure for parents.

This reframing is helpful because parents do not need play to become another source of guilt. Some may need simple ideas for how to start, while others may need permission to count the warm, responsive exchanges they are already having. In our research, lack of time is the biggest reported barrier to quality playtime, followed by lack of mental space or feeling too tired or stressed, while other parents point to unwanted interruptions, limited space, lack of knowledge or not having the right toys or materials.[1,21]



Screens without blame

Screens are part of 2020s parenting, and many parents use them when they are needed elsewhere, need a pause, or simply need to get through the next few minutes. The aim is not to blame parents for using screens, but to help families balance them with reassuring, face-to-face moments that babies can respond to directly.

Digital tools can provide ideas when parents want inspiration, but the expert view is clear that face-to-face interaction has a special place in the first 1,000 days. Among paediatricians in our research, 93% agree interactive, face-to-face play in the first 1,000 days is essential for healthy development, while 86% agree screens and digital tools are replacing baby-parent playtime. Yet play and interaction barely appear as a reason for non-routine paediatric appointments, creating a quiet conversation gap between what experts see as valuable and what parents may feel able to raise.[1]

Total HCP **n=425**



The power of social play

Play can also help rebuild the village around parents.
Playgroups, parent-and-baby classes, community spaces and informal play with other families can give babies new interactions and give parents the feeling that they are not doing this alone. When play becomes shared, it can support connection for the grown-ups as well as the baby.

The strongest message on play is that it should reduce pressure, not add to it. Everyday, responsive moments are often the ones babies understand best: someone sees them, answers them and enjoys being with them. Play does not have to be time-consuming or scheduled; it can be as simple as splashing in the water at bath time.

— Natasha Kirkham, Professor of Developmental Psychology, Birbeck, University of London



What a stronger play village looks like

Make it small
A few minutes of warm, responsive attention can be valuable.
Play does not need to be long, expensive or perfectly planned.

Make it reassuring
Parents need confidence that simple games, songs, cuddles, copycat sounds and everyday moments count.

Make it shared
The village can help by creating time, ideas, community spaces and permission, not judgement.

When the village makes space for play, it supports one of the simplest ways babies learn they are loved: someone sees them, responds to them and plays back.



Play is a powerful force for joy and one of the ways children begin to understand the world around them and their place in it. When families play together, they strengthen connections, build confidence and resilience, and create the foundations for children to thrive. That's why we're committed to helping more families unlock the power of play in their everyday lives.

— Lauren von Stackelberg, VP, Global Head of Social Responsibility, the LEGO Group.



09

Baby-Friendly Futures:

making the world around babies easier to grow into

56/100
Baby-Friendly Futures score

34%
Parents are somewhat worried about their baby's future

42%
parents agree that society is not designed with babies in mind

43%
Would consider having another child

Total base (parents) **n=4339** Q44 Q51 Q52
Q51: 34% somewhat worried (29%) + very worried (5%)

Every parent thinks beyond today. Even in the middle of feeds, changes, naps and night waking, there is a bigger question sitting quietly in the background: what kind of world is my baby growing into?

5% Parents are very worried about **their baby's future**

The Baby-Friendly Futures pillar scores 56 out of 100. At its centre is whether parents feel society is designed with babies in mind, because that question speaks directly to the everyday world babies and families move through. The pillar also includes wider signals of the emotional climate around early parenthood, including future worry and openness to having another child, which are best understood as contextual indicators rather than direct measures of a baby's prospects.[1]

In our research, 42% of parents agree that society is not designed with babies in mind. That is not only about formal policy. It is about everyday details: spaces that are easy to use, services that are simple to access, workplaces that understand family life, products that reduce friction and public conversations that respect the importance of the first years.[1]

Village story: where the future feels baby-friendly or uncertain
Spain shows why baby-friendly futures are important, with **50%** of parents agreeing that society is not designed with babies in mind, compared with **42%** overall. Greece has the highest level of future worry, at **53%,** while the United Kingdom is lowest on that measure, at **17%.** These signals show how strongly the wider world can shape the emotional climate around early parenthood.

Total parent base : n=4339
Total parent base in **Spain** : n=569
Total parent base in **Greece** : n=300
Total parent base in **UK** : n=500

The wider evidence points in the same direction. Early childhood is shaped not only by what happens inside the home, but by the relationships, environments, services and systems around a child. The Royal Foundation and Deloitte report describes early childhood through a social-ecological lens, recognising that family, community, services, employers, products and policy all influence the conditions around young children.
The Nurturing Care Framework makes a similar point through the idea that responsive caregiving, health, nutrition, safety, security and early learning are supported by the systems around families.[8,13]

Wider early-years research also shows that support for families is shaped by more than individual care. Access to affordable, high-quality early childhood education and care, family-friendly work and joined-up services can help parents balance family life and paid work, while strengthening the conditions for nurturing, responsive interactions with young children.[25]





Policy and systems are a real backdrop to early parenthood, especially around time, services and support. The Barometer can recognise that context without becoming a policy manifesto.

— Natasha Kirkham, Professor of Developmental Psychology, Birbeck, University of London

Village story: where practical priorities differ

Poland helps show that baby-friendly futures are not shaped by one pressure alone. In Poland, financial support is a less dominant priority than in some other markets, with **31%** of parents saying it would make the biggest difference, compared with the European average of 40%. The wider message is that families across Europe may need different kinds of help, but the shared need is for daily life to feel more supportive around babies.

Total parent base in Poland : **n=500**

Future worry is not a direct measure of a baby's prospects, and it should not be used to suggest that parents are pessimistic. It is better understood as part of the emotional climate around early parenthood: a signal that parents are thinking beyond today and asking whether the world around their baby will be supportive enough. The same care applies to another-child consideration, which sits here as a wider signal about confidence in family life rather than as a direct baby outcome.

What a stronger baby-friendly village looks like

Make babies visible

A baby-friendly future starts by recognising babies in decisions about services, spaces, transport, workplaces and community life.

Make daily life easier

Families need practical conditions that reduce friction, from accessible places to feed and change a baby to services and routines that reflect real baby care.

Make responsibility shared

The first 1,000 days should not sit on parents' shoulders alone. A stronger village treats babies' early years as something communities, services and society help to support.

When the village becomes more baby-friendly, it gives families more than practical ease. It gives parents the feeling that their baby belongs in the world, and that the world is prepared to make room for them.



10

Building a stronger village for every baby

The first reading of the Pampers Baby Village Barometer gives us a hopeful and honest picture. The village around babies is there. Parents are loving, committed and deeply aware of what their babies need. Healthcare professionals see the value of early interaction, sleep, care, play and support. Families are finding help from partners, relatives, friends, communities, professionals and digital sources.

The picture is uneven with plenty of scope for positive improvement. Support does not reach everyone in the same way. Advice can overwhelm, rest can feel fragile, play can feel insufficient and everyday life can make caring for a baby feel harder than it needs to be. These are not failures of parents; they are signs that the support conditions around babies can be strengthened.

A stronger village starts with connection. That means helping parents feel they have people they can turn to before worries grow heavier, and recognising that support can be emotional, practical, informational and professional. It also means keeping the message non-judgemental: babies can be loved and cared for in many different family shapes, and the question is whether the people around them have the support they need to respond.



A stronger village also needs clearer guidance. European parents live in an advice-rich world, but more information is not always more helpful. The research highlights the value of guidance that is trusted, simple and confidence-building, especially when parents and healthcare professionals are seeing the same challenge from different sides: parents feeling overwhelmed by the volume of information, and professionals seeing how too many sources can add pressure rather than reassurance.[1,12,15]

Village story: what the country stories tell us

Across the nine European countries, every village has strengths and challenges. Italy shows visible support, Germany play confidence and Sweden lower information overwhelm, while France, the UK, Romania, Greece, Spain and Poland show different pressure points. Together, they remind us that the village is not one thing. It is the care, clarity, rest, play and practical support that make everyday life gentler around babies.

Rest belongs within the care environment, rather than being treated as a private problem for tired families to solve alone. Babies will wake, and no report should suggest otherwise. A stronger village helps parents understand normal baby sleep, supports recovery where possible and reduces avoidable disruption through comfort, dryness, calm routines and shared support.[16,17,18]

Play is best understood as connection rather than performance. Parents already understand that early play is valuable, but they do not need another standard to meet. For the third of parents who do not feel confident supporting development through play, the most useful message is that small, responsive moments count: a song, a cuddle, a returned smile, a copied sound, a few minutes on the floor, or a moment of face-to-face attention during an ordinary part of the day.[10,19,20,21]

Baby-friendly futures need babies to be visible in everyday decisions. Families notice whether public spaces work, whether services feel joined up, whether work patterns leave room for care, and whether products and guidance reduce friction or add to it. These are not abstract issues; they shape how easy or difficult early care feels in daily life, even when the detail of policy is kept outside the scope of this report.[8,13]

The picture is uneven with plenty of scope for positive improvement. Support does not reach everyone in the same way. Advice can overwhelm, rest can feel fragile, play can feel insufficient and everyday life can make caring for a baby feel harder than it needs to be. These are not failures of parents; they are signs that the support conditions around babies can be strengthened.

A stronger village starts with connection. That means helping parents feel they have people they can turn to before worries grow heavier, and recognising that support can be emotional, practical, informational and professional. It also means keeping the message non-judgemental: babies can be loved and cared for in many different family shapes, and the question is whether the people around them have the support they need to respond.



Where brands can help

Brands cannot replace families, healthcare professionals or public services. Their role is to contribute responsibly: by listening to parents, sharing evidence-led guidance, designing products that reduce everyday friction and helping keep babies visible in public conversations about early life.



Pampers has a credible role because it is already part of the daily rhythm of baby care: the sleepy change, the fresh start, the wriggle on the mat, the night-time cuddle and the dry, comfortable baby who can settle back down. The Village Barometer helps make the conditions around those moments visible. It gives Pampers a way to convene a positive conversation about what babies need from the village around them.

Rather than pointing to one solution, the research highlights a series of practical shifts: closer support, clearer guidance, support for rest, lower-pressure play and a wider world that makes babies visible in daily life. When the village becomes warmer, clearer, calmer, more playful and more baby-friendly, it helps babies feel held by more than one pair of hands. It helps parents feel less alone. And it helps the first 1,000 days become what they should be: a time of care, connection and possibility.

The first 1,000 days are an important opportunity to support children's development. The focus should be on helping families provide nurturing care in a supportive environment, not on creating anxiety about missed moments.

— Chemba Raghavan, Global Lead, Early Childhood Development, UNICEF



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Ipsos carried out a survey for Baby Care, an UNICEF and Pampers (P&G) initiative.

Audience:
The study is based on surveys completed by **4,339 parents** of at least one child aged 0-3, with quotas on child age and gender and parent age and gender, and **425 paediatricians**.

Data collection and methodology:
Data was collected via device-agnostic online interviews.
Surveys lasted 20 minutes for parents and 10 minutes for paediatricians.
For parent sample, the data were weighted on baby's age and gender within each market.
Fieldwork was conducted from 23 March to 20 April 2026.

Scope:
The survey was conducted across nine countries, with parent/paediatrician samples as follows: Germany (500/50), France (500/51), Spain (589/50), UK (500/50), Italy (570/50), Sweden (500/50), Greece (300/24), Poland (500/50), and Romania (500/50).

Fieldwork was conducted from 23 March to 20 April 2026.

The 15 indicators used to calculate the Village Barometer are based on the following questions:

Pillar	# Question	Indicator	Threshold	Weighted %	Direction	Scoring Rule	Score input
Connection and Support	Q7	Has a village of support	Yes: strongly or somewhat	65	Positive	Higher = stronger support	65
Connection and Support	Q13	Feels supported overall as a parent	Very well or well supported	60	Positive	Higher = stronger support	60
Connection and Support	Q2	Feeling lonely	Sometimes, often or always	44	Negative	Reverse score	56
Confidence and Clarity	Q2	Feeling happy and confident as parent	At least often and one always	46	Positive	Higher = stronger confidence	46
Confidence and Clarity	Q44	Feels overwhelmed by parenting information	Agree or strongly agree	42	Negative	Reverse score	58
Confidence and Clarity	Q25	Feels confident playing	Very or extremely confident	64	Positive	Higher = stronger confidence	64
Rest and Recovery	Q2	Feeling tired	Often or always	54	Negative	Reverse score	46
Rest and Recovery	Q17	Sleep interruption: frequency	Often or every night	47	Negative	Reverse score	53
Rest and Recovery	Q19	Sleep interruption affects mood/ energy	A lot or extremely	40	Negative	Reverse score	60
Play and Bonding	Q26	Has enough time for play	Often or always	51	Positive	Higher = stronger play condition	51
Play and Bonding	Q31	Feels pressures about play	Identified one or more pressures	70	Negative	Reverse score	30
Baby-Friendly Futures	Q44	Society not designed for babies	Agree or strongly agree	42	Negative	Reverse score	58
Baby-Friendly Futures	Q51	Worry about baby future	Somewhat or very worried	34	Negative	Reverse score	66
Baby-Friendly Futures	Q52	Would consider having another child	Yes	43	Positive	Higher = stronger future confidence	43

With thanks to

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Pampers is supporting UNICEF programmes on early childhood development.

The Baby Care Report draws on insights from UNICEF research, reflecting a shared commitment between UNICEF and Pampers to advancing knowledge and evidence for early childhood development.