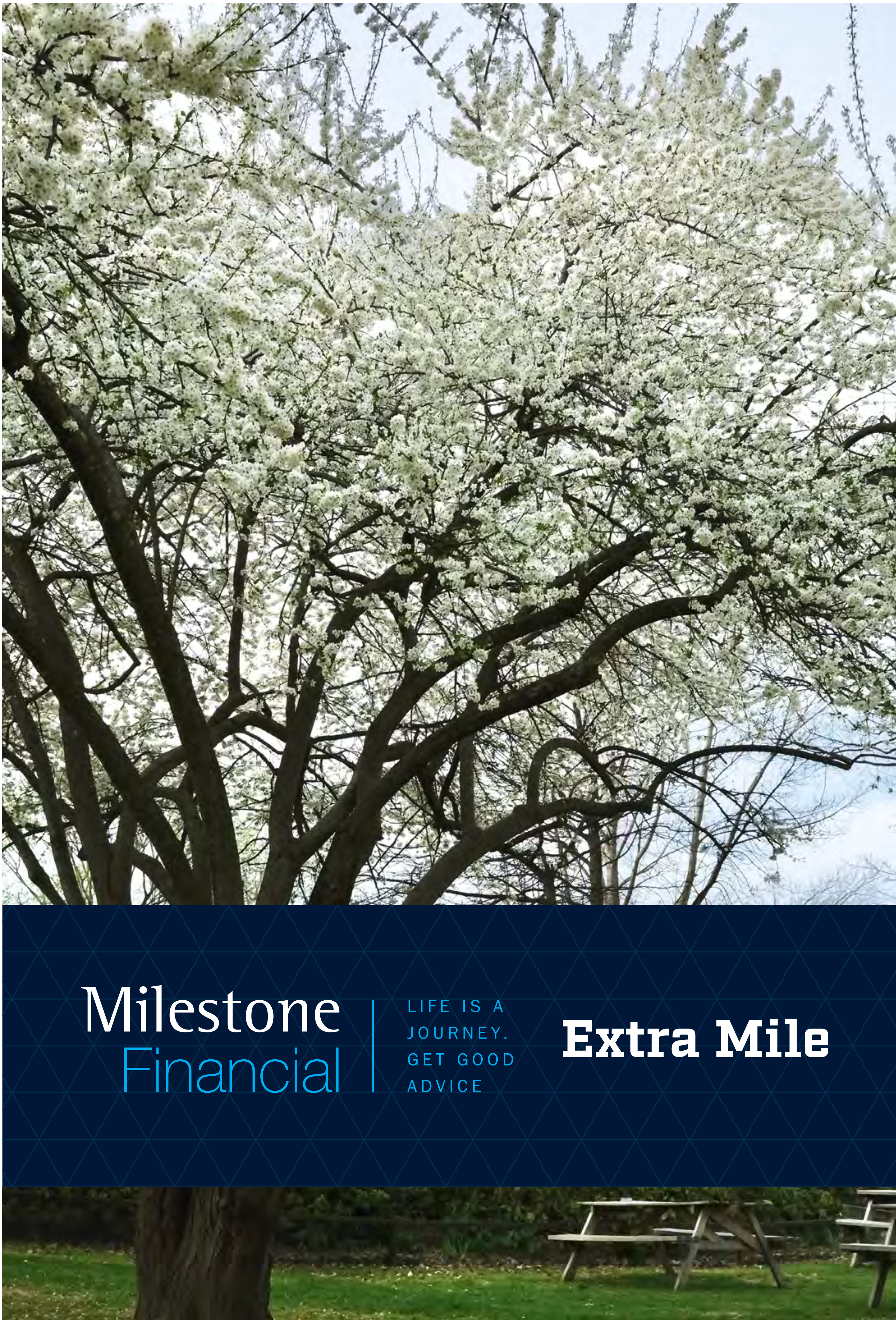


Quarter 3 / 2026

Milestone Financial

LIFE IS A JOURNEY. GET GOOD ADVICE

Extra Mile

Insight / Guidance / Dedication

Welcome to the Spring edition of the Milestone Newsletter for 2026

Spring offers a natural opportunity to pause, take stock and consider whether your financial arrangements still reflect the life you are building. The decisions made today—how you manage cash flow, prepare for uncertainty and invest for the future—can have a meaningful impact over time.

In this edition, we consider some of the broader forces influencing New Zealand households, from changing expectations around retirement to the policy choices emerging during the election campaign. We also reflect on what financial resilience looks like in practice, and the value of taking deliberate, informed action rather than reacting to headlines.

Our aim is to provide useful perspective and practical prompts for your next financial review. Small adjustments, made consistently and with purpose, can help create greater flexibility and confidence over the long term.

Editor
Mary Potter

Contents

Spring clean your finances

Spring is a good time to clear out more than cupboards. A short financial tidy-up can help you regain control, reduce unnecessary costs and make sure your money is supporting the life you want.

Review your spending

Look back over your recent bank and credit card transactions. Identify subscriptions, memberships or regular payments you no longer use, and check whether insurance, utilities or other household bills have increased. The goal is not to remove every small pleasure, but to ensure everyday spending reflects your priorities.

Refresh savings and debt

Check that your savings accounts have a clear purpose. You may want separate funds for emergencies, upcoming expenses, holidays or larger goals. Setting up an automatic transfer on payday can make saving easier and more consistent.

Also review loans, credit cards and mortgage repayments. Higher-interest debt can be particularly costly, so consider whether you can reduce it more quickly or restructure repayments to better suit your situation. Ensure any extra repayments still leave enough room for normal living costs and unexpected expenses.

Update insurance and records

Life changes can make old arrangements less suitable. Review your house, contents, vehicle, health, life and income-protection insurance. Check your sums insured, excesses and beneficiaries, particularly if you have moved, renovated, changed jobs or experienced a family change.

It is also a good time to check your will and enduring powers of attorney. Keep key records—such as insurance policies, investment statements, tax information and important contacts—in one secure place. Safely shred documents containing personal or financial information that you no longer need.

Review KiwiSaver and investments

Consider whether your KiwiSaver fund and investments still suit your goals, timeframe and comfort with market ups and downs. Avoid reacting to short-term headlines; a long-term plan should guide investment decisions.

A financial spring clean does not need to be complicated. A few practical checks can uncover savings, reduce stress and leave you feeling more organised for the year ahead.

Need a hand?

A short review can help identify opportunities to simplify your finances, strengthen savings, manage debt and ensure your investments remain aligned with your goals. Contact us to arrange a conversation and take the next step with confidence.

Build your emergency buffer — automatically

Unexpected expenses can happen to anyone: a car repair, dental bill, appliance replacement, or a temporary drop in income. Having accessible savings set aside for these events can reduce financial stress and help avoid relying on high-interest debt.

Sorted's new Buffer Builder App (sorted.org.nz/buffer-builder/) is a free tool designed to make building an emergency fund easier. It helps you save gradually, using small automated actions that fit around everyday life.

How it works

- You can choose one or more ways to add to your buffer:
- Save a chosen amount when you get paid.
- Round up everyday purchases and transfer the spare change to savings.
- Make additional one-off top-ups whenever it suits.
- Track progress towards a savings goal in one place.

The money stays in a bank account in your own name. The app is designed to transfer funds only into your nominated buffer account—you remain in control and can adjust or pause the settings at any time. It is currently available for customers banking with ANZ, ASB, BNZ, Kiwibank and Westpac.

Why an emergency fund matters

A cash buffer is not intended to replace insurance, long-term investments, or KiwiSaver. It is a readily available pool of money for genuine short-term surprises.

Even a modest starting goal can make a difference. For example, beginning with $500 to $1,000 may help cover a smaller unexpected cost. Over time, many households aim to build enough accessible savings to cover several months of essential expenses, tailored to the stability of their income, debt commitments, insurance arrangements and family circumstances.

A simple next step

If you have not yet started an emergency fund, consider setting aside a small amount on each payday. Consistency matters more than the initial amount. A regular $20 or $50 contribution can grow into a useful financial cushion over time.

Sorted's Buffer Builder App is free to use and is part of Sorted's wider range of independent money tools and guidance for New Zealanders. It uses open-banking connections through Akahu to support account insights and automated saving, with user permissions and controls applying to those connections.

KiwiSaver at the 2026 Election

KiwiSaver is becoming a key election issue, with parties taking very different approaches to how New Zealanders save for retirement.

The main questions are simple: should KiwiSaver become compulsory, how much should workers and employers contribute, and should Government provide extra support?

National proposes compulsory KiwiSaver from 1 July 2028, with default employee and employer contributions rising to 6% each by 2032. Its package also includes a proposed $1,500 Baby Boost and KiwiSaver contributions during paid parental leave.

NZ First goes further, proposing compulsory KiwiSaver enrolment at birth for New Zealand citizens, alongside a one-off $1,000 Crown contribution. Its workforce policy would also make KiwiSaver compulsory, with employee and employer contribution rates increasing to 8% initially and eventually reaching 10% each.

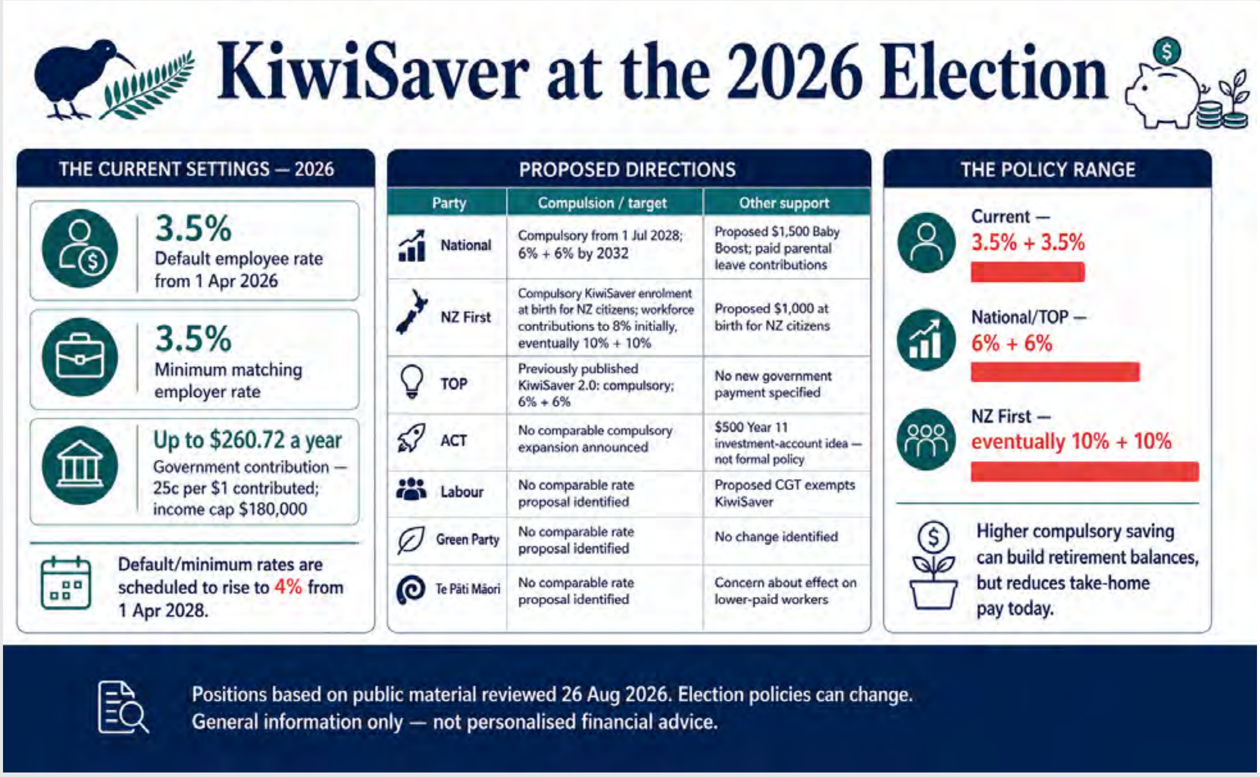
TOP's previously published KiwiSaver 2.0 proposal also supports compulsory saving, with contributions rising over time to 6% each.

By contrast, Labour, the Green Party and Te Pāti Māori have not identified comparable compulsory-contribution proposals in the material reviewed. Labour's proposed capital-gains tax would exempt KiwiSaver. ACT has not announced a compulsory expansion, although David Seymour has floated a $500 investment-account idea for Year 11 students—not yet formal ACT policy.

The current position

From 1 April 2026, the default employee rate and minimum matching employer rate are generally 3.5%. Eligible members can receive up to $260.72 a year from Government, subject to the income, age and residence rules.

The policy trade-off is clear: higher compulsory contributions can build stronger retirement savings over time, but they also reduce take-home pay today.



Policy positions reflect publicly available material reviewed on 26 August 2026 and may change during the election campaign.

How NZ Retirement Stacks Up

New Zealand's retirement system is simple: NZ Super provides a government-funded base income from age 65 for eligible people, while KiwiSaver helps build personal savings.

The infographic shows that other countries often require higher retirement contributions. That can mean more money is saved over a working lifetime—but usually with more rules, complexity and less flexibility.

NZ's strengths

- NZ Super is broad-based and is not generally reduced because you have KiwiSaver savings.
- KiwiSaver makes saving easy, with automatic enrolment for many new employees and employer contributions.
- From April 2028, the default minimum KiwiSaver rate will be 4% from the employee and 4% from the employer.

The key challenge

Minimum KiwiSaver contributions may not be enough to fund the retirement lifestyle many people want.

Australia requires employers to contribute 12% to superannuation. Singapore's compulsory combined contributions can be much higher. These systems are not directly comparable with New Zealand's, but they highlight the importance of consistently saving over time.

NZ Super and the future

NZ Super remains an important part of retirement income for many New Zealanders. However, it is funded largely from current tax revenue, and its cost will rise as more people retire and relatively fewer people are working and paying tax.

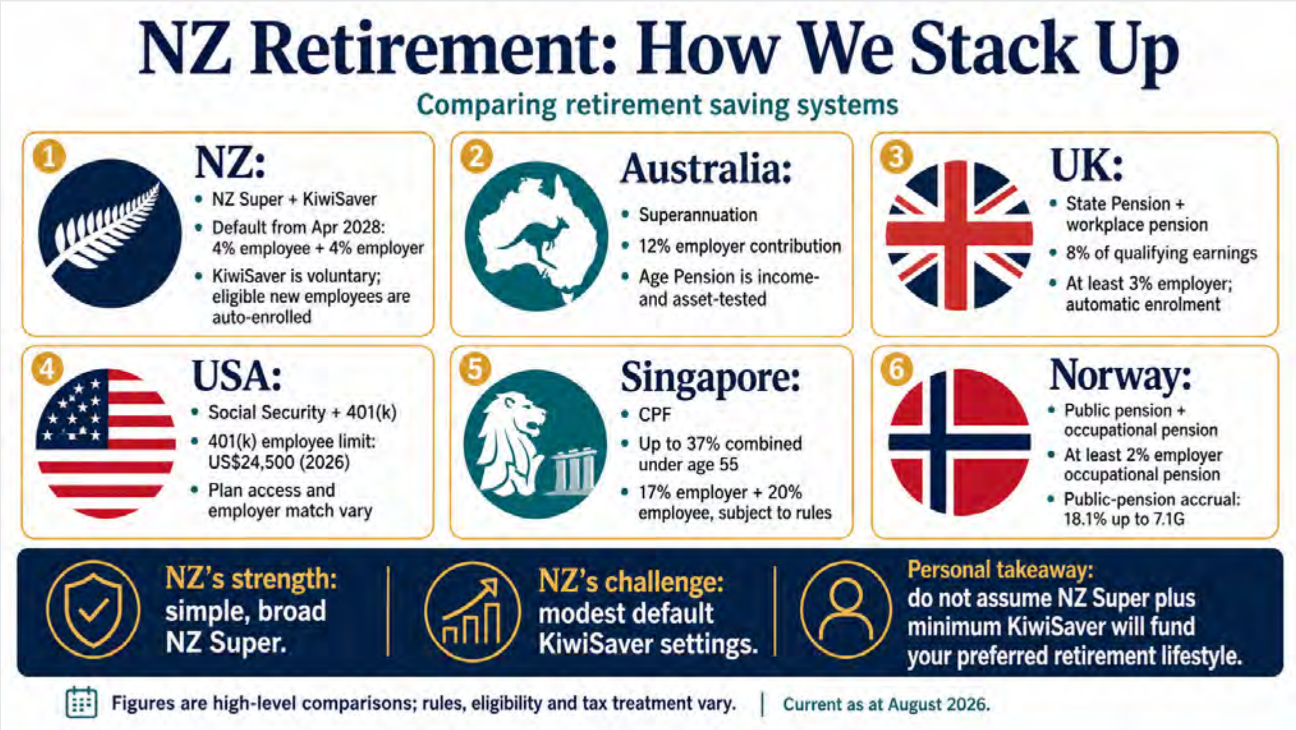
Treasury's long-term modelling highlights the demographic challenge: there were around seven working-age people for every person aged over 65 in the 1960s, about four today, and potentially around two by 2065.

This does not mean NZ Super is about to disappear. However, future governments may need to consider changes to eligibility age, payment settings, taxes or other policies to help keep the system affordable.

What this means for you

Think of NZ Super as a starting point—not a complete retirement plan.

Your future outcome will depend on factors such as:



- Your KiwiSaver contribution rate and fund choice
- How long you contribute for
- Whether you have a mortgage, rent or other costs in retirement
- Other savings and investments you build along the way
- The lifestyle you want to enjoy later in life

A regular review of your KiwiSaver settings and wider retirement plan can help ensure your savings are working toward your own goals.

New Zealanders are feeling more confident — but financial pressure remains

The Financial Services Council's 2026 Financial Resilience Index presents a mixed picture: many New Zealanders feel more capable of making financial decisions yet cost pressures and financial stress remain part of everyday life for many households.

Financial confidence reached its highest recorded level, with 90% of respondents describing themselves as at least reasonably confident in making financial decisions. Self-reported understanding of key investment concepts—including diversification, asset allocation and risk versus return—also improved.

There are positive signs in longer-term planning. Retirement preparedness has gradually improved, with 52% of respondents now feeling very or reasonably prepared for retirement, up from 40% in 2020. KiwiSaver remains the most widely held investment, reported by 75% of investors surveyed.

However, resilience is still uneven. While fewer people said they could sustain their current lifestyle for less than one month without income, only 40% said they could access $5,000 within a week without going into debt—unchanged from the previous two years. Household savings also declined, particularly among those with lower savings and investment balances.

Inflation remains New Zealanders' leading financial concern, while worries about interest rates have changed little. Financial stress continues to affect wellbeing: 60% reported that financial issues had adversely affected their overall wellbeing, 59% their mental health, and 45% their physical health. Regular money worries eased slightly, but 65% still worry about money at least a few times a year.

Financial resilience is not about predicting every economic change. It is about building practical options before you need them:

- Maintain an accessible emergency fund where possible.
- Review whether your KiwiSaver fund and contribution rate remain appropriate for your goals and timeframe.
- Diversify investments rather than relying too heavily on one asset type or short-term market movements.
- Revisit retirement projections regularly—especially as living costs, income and retirement plans evolve.
- Seek advice early if money worries are affecting your household or wellbeing.

Retirement is Changing

Ask someone to picture New Zealand's ageing population and they'll probably mention rising healthcare costs, Superannuation or pressure on aged care services.

But there's another side to the story that doesn't get nearly as much attention.

A new report from the Office for Seniors reveals that older New Zealanders are making an enormous contribution to our economy and communities - not just through spending and taxes, but through work, volunteering, caregiving and supporting their families.

In fact, the report suggests that ageing is not simply a challenge to be managed. It's also one of New Zealand's greatest opportunities.

Retirement is changing

The traditional image of retirement - finishing work at 65 and putting your feet up - is becoming less common.

Many older New Zealanders are choosing to stay in the workforce, whether that's through part-time work, consulting, running a business or pursuing a new career altogether. As people live longer and healthier lives, retirement is becoming more flexible and personalised.

The report predicts that the number of people aged 65 and over who are working will more than double over the next 50 years, making older workers an increasingly important part of New Zealand's workforce.

The contribution we don't always see

Not all contributions come with a payslip.

Every day, older New Zealanders care for grandchildren, support partners, volunteer in their communities, help neighbours and provide informal care for family members. These activities often go unnoticed in economic discussions, yet they save families, charities and community organisations countless hours and resources.

The report estimates the value of this unpaid work runs into tens of billions of dollars each year.

A growing economic force

Older New Zealanders are also becoming one of the country's most important consumer groups.

From travel and recreation to housing, transport and everyday living expenses, their spending power continues to grow. Businesses that understand the needs of older consumers are likely to play a significant role in the future economy.

With the number of people aged 65 and over expected to more than double by 2074, the influence of this generation will only increase.

Changing the conversation about ageing

Perhaps the report's most important message is that ageing should not be viewed solely through the lens of cost and dependency.

Many older New Zealanders are active, engaged and making valuable contributions every day. They are workers, volunteers, caregivers, mentors, consumers and community leaders.

As New Zealand continues to age, the challenge is not simply preparing for the future - it is recognising the enormous value that older people already bring to our society.

Far from being a burden, older New Zealanders are helping shape the country's future, and their contribution is only set to grow.

Source: Seniorguide.co.nz

Fish tacos with lime yoghurt & crunchy slaw

Serves: 4
Preparation: 20 minutes
Cooking: 10 minutes

Ingredients

For the fish

- 600 g firm white fish fillets, such as hoki, tarakihi or gurnard
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- Finely grated zest and juice of 1 lime
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

For the slaw

- 2 cups finely shredded green cabbage
- 1 cup finely shredded red cabbage
- 1 carrot, grated
- 2 spring onions, thinly sliced
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh coriander
- Juice of ½ lime
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- Pinch of salt

For the lime yoghurt

- ¾ cup plain Greek yoghurt
- Juice and finely grated zest of ½ lime
- 1 small garlic clove, finely grated
- 1 tablespoon chopped coriander
- Pinch of salt

To serve

- 8 small flour or corn tortillas
- 1 avocado, sliced
- Lime wedges
- Hot sauce or sliced jalapeños, optional

Method

1. Cut the fish into large bite-sized pieces. Combine the olive oil, lime zest and juice, cumin, paprika, garlic powder, salt and pepper. Toss with the fish and set aside for 10 minutes.
2. For the slaw, combine the cabbage, carrot, spring onions and coriander. Toss with lime juice, olive oil and a pinch of salt. Set aside.
3. Stir together the yoghurt, lime zest and juice, garlic, coriander and salt. Add a splash of water if you would like a thinner, drizzle-style sauce.
4. Heat a non-stick frying pan over medium-high heat. Cook the fish for around 2–3 minutes on each side, until golden and just cooked through. Avoid overcrowding the pan.
5. Warm the tortillas according to packet directions or in a dry frying pan for 20–30 seconds each side.
6. Fill each tortilla with fish, slaw and avocado. Drizzle with lime yoghurt, add hot sauce if wanted, and serve immediately with lime wedges.

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