

# 1997 fears easing new survey reveals

By Enoch Wong

A THIRD of the public believes next year will be more prosperous and socially stable than this year, an opinion poll released yesterday found.

The Social Sciences Research Centre of Hong Kong University poll of 563 residents indicated strong confidence in the territory's future.

Of the respondents, 37.1 per cent said Hong Kong would become better next year. Only 21.6 per cent said it would be worse, and 20.8 per cent said it would be more or less the same.

Research officer Robert Chung Ting-yiu said the public had become more confident in the territory's future because previous worries over withdrawal of foreign investment and instability in local politics had been steadily removed.

The poll was conducted on 9 December.

Almost 54 per cent were satisfied with events this year, while 23.2 per cent were not.

Mr Chung said the result was within his expectation.

Surveys since 1994 had showed popular perceptions of the handover had become more positive.

"Since the Governor's political reforms, which infuriated China, many people were worried about Hong Kong's future," Mr Chung said.

"However, in these few years, there has been no sign of large withdrawal of foreign investment, and political rows between China and Britain seem to be fewer than before.

"The public therefore has gradually regained its confidence."

The poll also showed 68.7 per cent of people were happier in 1996 than last year.