

65pc voter turnout forecast for election

By ANDY HO

AN enthusiastic 65.2 per cent of registered voters have indicated that they will cast their ballots in the Legislative Council direct elections, according to a Hongkong University survey.

The figure is significantly higher than the 56.7 per cent derived from a similar study conducted between July 7 and 12.

Only 82 of the 1,469 registered voters polled in the latest survey said they would shun the ballot box on September 15.

The remaining 28.8 per cent remained undecided on whether to vote.

It appears that some of those who earlier said they were yet to decide whether to vote have now made up their mind to take part in the inaugural direct polls to Legco.

In the previous study, as much as 35.1 per cent had adopted a wait-and-see attitude.

Mr Robert Chung Ting-yiu, assistant research officer of the Hongkong University's Social Sciences Research Centre, who directed the survey, cautioned that some of those who said they would vote might not do so for various reasons.

But he observed that electors in general seemed to be more eager to vote.

The turnout projection remains much higher than any previous figures, even if adjusted by a 10 per cent "social desirability factor" to allow replies which were intended to be acceptable.

The adjustment is arbitrary as little local research findings in this regard are available.

Island West electors have emerged to be the most enthusiastic among the nine constituencies, with 72½ per cent of the 202 respondents saying they would vote.

Six candidates – a former television host, two United Democrat leaders, a

lawyer from the Liberal Democratic Federation and two members of the New Hongkong Alliance – are vying for two seats in the constituency.

Kowloon Central, with 59.9 per cent of respondents pledging to vote, turned out to be the only district which fell short of the 60 per cent threshold.

The constituency, which has attracted seven candidates, had 9.2 per cent of the voters suggesting they would not bother to vote.

New Territories North had almost two-thirds of its respondents giving a non-committal answer on their voting intentions.

The Secretary for Constitutional Affairs, Mr Michael Suen Ming-yeung, earlier expressed hopes that the Legco elections could reach a 50 per cent turnout.

Other electoral officers have also estimated a turnout of at least 50 per cent.