

**Flags Monitoring Project 2008/09**

**Interim Report Covering 2008**  
**with comparative figures from 2007 and 2006**

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## **Executive Summary**

The Institute of Irish Studies at Queen's University, Belfast has undertaken a comprehensive survey of flags and emblems displayed on arterial routes in Northern Ireland for three years since 2006. This interim report provides some of the findings from the 2008 survey and compares some of the results with those from 2006 and 2007.

The rationale and methodology for this survey can be found in the 2006 survey report (<http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/flags-monitoring.pdf> p.5-17). The 2008 report differs only in that we have added a third survey after Easter thus capturing the numbers of flags put up during this period and also giving an insight into the numbers of flags that have remained up throughout the winter of 2007 and spring of 2008.

Three surveys were conducted in 2008, the first between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> April, the second between 30<sup>th</sup> June and 11<sup>th</sup> July, the third between September 15<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>.

In addition this report utilises data collected in the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (NILT).

## **Key Results**

The results for 2008 are in many ways notable for a lack of change rather than anything significantly new.

- The number of items displayed over the July period has remained reasonably constant over three years.
- In 2008 the number of items in the September period, that had been counted in the July period, categorised as unionist/loyalist decreased by just under 59%. This compares with decreases of 54% in 2006 and 66% in 2007.
- Rates of removal in this period for nationalist items fluctuates greatly due to events that take place in August and September, particular the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Hunger Strike in 2006 and the success of Tyrone GAA at the All Ireland in 2008 (2006 items increased by 88%, 2007 by 1% and 2008 160%).
- There was some reduction in paramilitary flags in 2008 although not a substantial one.

- At the survey over Easter 2008 there were 537 unionist and loyalist symbols compared to 228 nationalist and republican symbols. A considerable number of the unionist/loyalist symbols had been displayed throughout the winter.
- The 2007 NILT Survey reveals that 84% of people questioned said they did not support the flying of flags in their area.
- When asked about their willingness to shop in an area displaying loyalist or republican flags, 38% said they were less willing and 4% more willing when loyalist flags are displayed and 44% were less willing and 4% more willing to shop when republican flags are displayed.
- When offered a range of choices 64% of those questioned suggested paramilitary groups are sometimes responsible for the displays of Union flags on lampposts and 63% identified paramilitary groups as sometimes responsible for putting up Tricolours.

## **Conclusions**

The 2008 survey has revealed that there has been little change in terms of the numbers and types of displays in public spaces in Northern Ireland and the rate of removal of flags and other displays in September was not as high in 2008 as it had been in 2007.

This survey also helps to evaluate the effectiveness of the *Joint Protocol in Relations to the Display of Flags in Public Areas* to which a range of agencies have been involved, led by the PSNI. In terms of this protocol we can say that thus far there is no evidence of the 'removal of all flags and emblems from arterial routes and town centres' (Joint Aim 2.4). And whilst there has been some effort to remove displays, making them 'time-bound', this has often been into October and our Easter survey revealed a large amount of material that had remained in place throughout the winter (Joint Aim 2.4).

## **Introduction**

This interim report provides some of the main findings from three surveys of flags and emblems displayed on main routes in Northern Ireland. This follows the same methodology as used in previous surveys in 2006 and 2007. The rationale and methodology for this survey can be found in the 2006 survey report (<http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/flags-monitoring.pdf> p.5-17). The 2008 report differs only in that we have added a third survey period over Easter thus capturing the numbers of flags put up during this period and also giving an insight into the numbers of flags that have remained up throughout the winter of 2007 and spring of 2008.

Three surveys were conducted in 2008, the first between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> April, the second between 30<sup>th</sup> June and 11<sup>th</sup> July, the third between September 15<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>.

Also in this report are illuminating comparisons with the previous surveys of 2006 and 2007. Having updated our system of categorisation from 2006 and 2007 we have adjusted the database, consequently the figures do not quite tally with those produced in previous reports. The differences are however very minor.

In addition, we were not happy about some of the fluctuation in the figures for murals. In part this was due to defining what counts as a mural. This is actually less obvious than a flag since items such as spray painted paramilitary crests could be seen as graffiti or a mural. We regret not being clearer about this with researchers when we started the survey. However, in returning to the raw data we also believe an error was made in 2007 which involved not counting 8 or 9 murals in the Bogside area of Derry/Londonderry. Rather than adjust the figures for that year with an estimated number we feel it best to recognise the error in footnotes.

## **RESULTS**

### **2008 Easter Findings**

These figures were collected between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> April in order to assess the level of symbolic display outside the marching season and around the nationalist/republican commemorations of the Easter Rising.

#### **Forms of symbols**

The range and numbers of items on display at Easter 2008 were compared with those on display in September 2007.

<b>Symbol</b>	<b>2007 Autumn Total</b>	<b>Easter 2008 Frequency</b>	<b>Easter 2008 % of Total</b>
arch	1	2	.3
bannerette	0	0	0
bunting	23	6	.8
flag	1510	441	56.1
graffiti	31	23	2.9
kerbstones	33	35	4.5
lamppost	44	98	12.5
mural	63	83 <sup>1</sup>	10.6
placard	38	34	4.3
other	50	64	8.1
Total	1793	786	100

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<sup>1</sup> An increase in murals was due to an update in the categorisation system between 07 and 08 and an error that was made in not counting around 8 murals in the Bogside area of Derry/Londonderry in 2007. As such we do not believe these figures indicate a substantial increase in this form of display.

In total there were 786 items on display across Northern Ireland. Of these the majority were flags, with painted lampposts and murals making up much of the remainder.

- As expected the more permanent features including murals, and kerbstones remain at much the same levels as during the marching season, though the number of painted lampposts has increased.
- Some features such as arches, bunting and bannerettes which are characteristic of the marching season displays are much reduced or absent
- The number of flags is much reduced and these constitute a smaller proportion of the overall total.

### **Manner of Display**

The ways in which these items were displayed, reflects the type and proportion of different symbols

<b>Display</b>	<b>2007 Round 2 Total</b>	<b>2008 Easter Total</b>	<b>2008 Easter % of Total</b>
From arch	3	5	<b>0.6</b>
From building	135	102	<b>13.0</b>
Bunting-style	8	0	<b>0</b>
From flagpole	65	58	<b>7.4</b>
From lamppost	1302	429	<b>54.6</b>
From mural	61	85	<b>10.8</b>
From private house	98	9	<b>1.1</b>
Stand alone items	65	72	<b>9.2</b>
Other	56	26	<b>3.3</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1793</b>	<b>786</b>	<b>100.0</b>

- As with the displays during marching season, the placing of flags on lampposts remains the predominant form of display.

- The relatively higher proportion of symbols displayed on buildings probably reflects permanent displays including flags and symbols on public buildings and Orange Halls.
- The smaller proportion of items flown from lampposts reflects the lower number of flags in place when compared to the autumn period.

### **New and Old Emblems**

Emblems were again classified as new or old depending on their visible age. If we contrast this to the items on display at the beginning of the marching season (to control for the differential rates of decay of items over the summer months)

<b>Form of Symbol</b>	<b>Total old 2007</b>	<b>2007 % of each symbol old</b>	<b>Easter 2008 Total old</b>	<b>Easter 2008 % of Total</b>
arch	2	7.4	2	<b>100%</b>
bannerette	0	0	0	
bunting	1	1.2	5	<b>83.3%</b>
flag	175	4.2	184	<b>41.7%</b>
graffiti	21	60.0	11	<b>47.8%</b>
kerbstones	15	34.1	24	<b>68.6%</b>
lamppost	14	24.6	66	<b>67.3%</b>
placard	13	29.5	16	<b>47.1%</b>
Total (including symbols classified as 'other')	274	5.9	423	<b>53.8%</b>

- Overall the proportion of older items is much higher at Easter than in the previous summer.
- It appears that 423 items of different sorts were displayed throughout the winter.

## Symbol Categories

Symbols were again categorised using the taxonomy devised in 2006.

<b>Symbol category</b>	<b>Frequency (2007 R2)</b>	<b>Easter 2008 Frequency</b>	<b>Easter 2008 % of Total</b>
national	758	441	<b>56.1</b>
regional	561	97	<b>12.3</b>
paramilitary	122	112	<b>14.2</b>
sport	173	40	<b>5.1</b>
commemorative	51	65	<b>8.3</b>
Loyal Order	44	11	<b>1.4</b>
political party/statement	18	17	<b>2.2</b>
other	66	3	<b>0.4</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1793</b>	<b>786</b>	<b>100.0</b>

In addition to the overall smaller number of items on display it is notable that:

- The proportion of regional items is lower and that of national items is higher than during the marching season.
- The number of paramilitary items on display is much the same as in September of the previous year.
- The proportion of paramilitary and commemorative is higher, reflecting the lower overall total of symbols.

This suggests that paramilitary symbols are more consistently left up throughout the year.

These were then broken down into unionist/loyalist and nationalist/republican categories.

<b>Symbol category</b>	<b>Unionist/loyalist symbols</b>	<b>Nationalist/republican symbols</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
national	329	96	16	441	<b>56.1</b>
regional	93	4	0	97	<b>12.3</b>
paramilitary	64	48	0	112	<b>14.2</b>
sport	10	27	3	40	<b>5.1</b>
commemorative	25	40	0	65	<b>8.3</b>
Loyal Order	11	0	0	11	<b>1.4</b>
political party/statement	4	13	0	17	<b>2.2</b>
other	1	0	2	3	<b>0.4</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>537</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>786</b>	<b>100.0</b>

- The majority of emblems on arterial routes and town centres at this time are unionist/loyalist.
- The largest proportion of symbols are national, with regional and paramilitary symbols making up much of the rest
- The higher proportions of nationalist/republican commemorative and paramilitary items (relative to unionist/loyalist equivalents) reflect the concurrent commemorative events.
- It is striking that even during the period of Easter – seen as a Republican commemorative period – there are still many more Unionist/Loyalist symbols on display.

## Paramilitary symbols

	2007 Round 2 total	Easter 2008	Easter 2008 %
IRA/Dissident IRA	18	13	<b>11.6</b>
Red Hand Commandos	6	5	<b>4.5</b>
starry plough	21	30	<b>26.8</b>
UDA	11	11	<b>9.8</b>
UFF	13	7	<b>6.2</b>
UVF	32	32	<b>28.6</b>
YCV	14	8	<b>7.1</b>
sunburst	1	2	<b>1.8</b>
UYM	1	0	<b>0</b>
LVF	3	0	<b>0</b>
IRSP	0	3	<b>2.7</b>
Other	2	1	<b>0.9</b>
Total	122	112	<b>100.0</b>

- Paramilitary displays remained quite consistent between autumn 2007 and spring 2008.
- Only a small increase in starry ploughs and small decreases in UFF and YCV symbols is suggestive of change.
- **There is therefore evidence that paramilitary symbols are more consistently being left up all year round.**

## **Summer 2008: Round One findings**

These figures were collected between 30<sup>th</sup> June and 11<sup>th</sup> July 2008. It is worth noting that this moves the data collection dates one day further towards the 12<sup>th</sup> than in previous years, hence we would expect a slightly higher level of symbols counted.

### **Forms of symbols**

To begin we have compared the range and numbers of items in July 2007.

<b>Symbol</b>	<b>2007 Frequency</b>	<b>2007 % of Total</b>	<b>2008 Frequency</b>	<b>2008 % of Total</b>
arch	27	<b>0.6</b>	19	<b>.4</b>
bannerette	80	<b>1.7</b>	101	<b>2.0</b>
bunting	82	<b>1.8</b>	104	<b>2.1</b>
flag	4123	<b>89.1</b>	4470	<b>88.4</b>
graffiti	35	<b>.8</b>	23	<b>.5</b>
kerbstones	44	<b>1.0</b>	43	<b>.9</b>
lamppost	57	<b>1.2</b>	105	<b>2.1</b>
mural	83	<b>1.8</b>	103 <sup>2</sup>	<b>2.0</b>
placard	44	<b>1.0</b>	33	<b>.7</b>
other	54	<b>1.2</b>	54	<b>1.1</b>
Total	4629	<b>100.0</b>	5055	<b>100</b>

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<sup>2</sup> An increase in murals was due to an update in the categorisation system between 07 and 08 and an error that was made in not counting around 8 murals in the Bogside area of Derry/Londonderry in 2007. As such we do not believe these figures indicate a substantial increase in this form of display.

- These figures suggest an increase in the number of flags flying on the main roads of Northern Ireland over the July period. However, given that our survey finished on the 11<sup>th</sup> rather than the 10<sup>th</sup> of July in 2008 this increase might be partly explained by the closeness of the Twelfth of July celebrations. Nevertheless it is clear that there has been no decrease in the numbers of flags displayed on arterial routes.

### **Manner of Display**

Looking at the ways in which these items were displayed there would appear to be little variation between years.

<b>Display</b>	<b>2007 Frequency</b>	<b>2007 %</b>	<b>2008 Frequency</b>	<b>2008 %</b>
From arch	73	<b>1.6</b>	70	<b>1.4</b>
From building	240	<b>5.2</b>	417	<b>8.2</b>
Bunting-style	35	<b>0.8</b>	92	<b>1.8</b>
From flagpole	138	<b>3.0</b>	130	<b>2.6</b>
From lamppost	3480	<b>75.2</b>	3663	<b>72.5</b>
From mural	91	<b>2.0</b>	121	<b>2.4</b>
From private house	432	<b>9.3</b>	428	<b>8.5</b>
Stand alone items	80	<b>1.7</b>	78	<b>1.5</b>
Other	60	<b>1.3</b>	56	<b>1.1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>4629</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>5055</b>	<b>100</b>

- Most emblems are displayed in the numbers and proportions as in 2007
- An increase in emblems being displayed from buildings (public buildings, offices, shops etc) would appear to be evident

## New and old emblems

Emblems were again classified as new or old depending on their visible age.

<b>Form of Symbol</b>	<b>Total old 2007</b>	<b>2007 % of each symbol old</b>	<b>Total old 2008</b>	<b>2008 % of each symbol old</b>
arch	2	7.4	0	0
bannerette	0	0	0	0
bunting	1	1.2	1	1.0
flag	175	4.2	16	0.4
graffiti	21	60.0	5	21.7
kerbstones	15	34.1	10	23.3
lamppost	14	24.6	4	3.8
placard	13	29.5	1	3.0
Total (incl other)	274	5.9	102	2.0

- Overall there were would appear to be fewer old items on display this year
- This is partly due to decreases in older flags, lampposts and placards

## Symbol Categories

Symbols were again categorised using the system devised in 2006.

<b>Symbol category</b>	<b>Frequency 2007 R1</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>Frequency 2008 R1</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
national	2299	<b>49.7</b>	2592	<b>51.3</b>
regional	1530	<b>33.1</b>	1551	<b>30.7</b>
paramilitary	212	<b>4.6</b>	173	<b>3.4</b>
sport	113	<b>2.4</b>	290	<b>5.7</b>
commemorative	77	<b>1.7</b>	151	<b>3.0</b>
Loyal Order	250	<b>5.4</b>	251	<b>5.0</b>
political party/statement	19	<b>0.4</b>	16	<b>0.3</b>
other	129	<b>2.8</b>	31	<b>0.6</b>
Total	4629	<b>100.0</b>	5055	<b>100</b>

- National and regional symbols remain at much the same proportion as in the previous year as did Loyal Order symbols.
- There was an increase in sporting symbols and commemorative symbols.
- There was also a marginal decrease in paramilitary symbols.

## Paramilitary symbols

	<b>2007 Frequency</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>2008 Frequency</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
IRA/ dissident IRA	15	<b>7.1</b>	13	<b>7.5</b>
Red Hand Commandos	8	<b>3.8</b>	4	<b>2.3</b>
Starry plough	34	<b>16.0</b>	26	<b>15.0</b>
UDA	19	<b>9.0</b>	28	<b>16.2</b>
UFF	21	<b>9.9</b>	15	<b>8.7</b>
UVF (UVF Somme)	68 (1)	<b>32.5</b>	42	<b>24.3</b>
YCV	39	<b>18.4</b>	37	<b>21.4</b>
UYM	3	<b>1.4</b>	0	<b>0</b>
LVF	3	<b>1.4</b>	2	<b>1.2</b>
Other	1	<b>0.5</b>	3	<b>1.7</b>
IRSP	0	<b>0</b>	3	<b>1.7</b>
Total	212	<b>100.0</b>	173	100.0

- Whilst there were fewer UFF symbols there was an increase in the number of UDA items. This number may be accounted for by the ten UDA flags that appeared on Sandy Row in the week before the Twelfth but were taken down by the Twelfth of July (they nevertheless appear in our figures).
- There was a decrease in UVF and Red Hand Commando symbols.

## Summer 2008: Round Two Findings

### Form of symbols

If we first examine the changes in symbols displayed between the first and second rounds of the 2008 census:

	<b>2008 R1 Frequency</b>	<b>Number of items coming down</b>	<b>% of original items removed</b>	<b>Number of new items erected</b>	<b>2008 round 2 total</b>	<b>% change between rounds</b>
arch	19	17	<b>89.5%</b>	1	3	<b>-84.2%</b>
bannerette	101	81	<b>80.2%</b>	3	23	<b>-77.2%</b>
bunting	104	91	<b>87.5%</b>	45	58	<b>-44.2%</b>
flag	4470	2948	<b>66.0%</b>	1182	2704	<b>-39.5%</b>
graffiti	23	4	<b>17.4%</b>	12	31	<b>+34.8%</b>
kerbstones	43	12	<b>27.9%</b>	2	33	<b>-23.3%</b>
lamppost	105	23	<b>21.9%</b>	4	86	<b>-18.1%</b>
mural	103	12	<b>11.7%</b>	2	93	<b>-9.7%</b>
placard	33	6	<b>18.2%</b>	17	44	<b>+33.3%</b>
other	54	19	<b>35.2%</b>	3	38	<b>-29.6%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>5055</b>	<b>3213</b>	<b>63.5%</b>	<b>1271</b>	<b>3113</b>	<b>-38.4%</b>

- Rates of removal and display of new items closely parallel that of previous years.
- However the large number of new flags displayed over the summer has reduced the overall rate of removal during this period.

	<b>2007 Round 1 total</b>	<b>2007 Round 2 total</b>	<b>Change 2007</b>	<b>2008 R1 Frequency</b>	<b>2008 round 2 total</b>	<b>% change between rounds</b>
arch	27	1	<b>-96.2%</b>	19	3	<b>-84.2%</b>
bannerette	80	0	<b>-100%</b>	101	23	<b>-77.2%</b>
bunting	82	23	<b>-72.0%</b>	104	58	<b>-44.2%</b>
flag	4123	1510	<b>-63.4%</b>	4470	2704	<b>-39.5%</b>
graffiti	35	31	<b>-11.4%</b>	23	31	<b>+34.8%</b>
kerbstones	44	33	<b>-25.0%</b>	43	33	<b>-23.3%</b>
lamppost	57	44	<b>-22.8%</b>	105	86	<b>-18.1%</b>
mural	83	63	<b>-24.1%</b>	103 <sup>3</sup>	93	<b>-9.7%</b>
placard	44	38	<b>-13.6%</b>	33	44	<b>+33.3%</b>
other	54	50	<b>-7.4%</b>	54	38	<b>-29.6%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>4629</b>	<b>1793</b>	<b>-61.3%</b>	<b>5055</b>	<b>3113</b>	<b>-38.4%</b>

- These figures suggest that many fewer flags were removed in September 2008 than had been removed in 2007, though from the previous table this is largely due to the display of new flags over this period.
- The removal rate for bannerettes is also lower than in the previous year when all were removed.
- Together with an increase in placards and graffiti these figures give the impression that removal of symbols did not take place with the same consistency in 2008 (-38.4%) as that observed in 2007 (-61.3%). However, there are some mitigating factors which are discussed below.

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<sup>3</sup> An increase in murals was due to an update in the categorisation system between 07 and 08 and an error that was made in not counting around 8 murals in the Bogside area of Derry/Londonderry in 2007. As such we do not believe these figures indicate a substantial increase in this form of display.

## Symbol categories

	<b>2007 Round 1 total</b>	<b>2007 Round 2 total</b>	<b>Change 2007</b>	<b>2008 Round 1 total</b>	<b>2008 Round 2 total</b>	<b>Change 2007</b>
national	2299	758	<b>-67.0%</b>	2592	1233	<b>-52.4</b>
regional	1530	561	<b>-63.3%</b>	1551	586	<b>-62.2%</b>
paramilitary	212	122	<b>-42.5%</b>	173	118	<b>-31.8%</b>
sport	113	173	<b>+53.1%</b>	290	999	<b>+244.5%</b>
commemorative	77	51	<b>-33.7%</b>	151	72	<b>-52.3%</b>
Loyal Order	250	44	<b>-82.4%</b>	251	54	<b>-78.5%</b>
political party/statement	19	18	<b>-5.3%</b>	16	26	<b>+62.5%</b>
other	129	66	<b>-48.8%</b>	31	25	<b>-19.3%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>4629</b>	<b>1793</b>	<b>-61.3%</b>	<b>5055</b>	<b>3113</b>	<b>-38.4%</b>

- Removal rates for most categories remain much the same as in the previous year.
- The striking element here is the massive increase in sporting displays. This is largely explainable as Tyrone reached and won the GAA All Ireland Final in September 2008. The county was festooned with flags.

## Paramilitary symbols

	2007 Round 1 total	2007 Round 2 total	Change 2007	2008 Round 1 total	2008 Round 2 total	Change 2008
IRA/Dissident IRA	15	18	<b>+20%</b>	13	12	<b>-7.7%</b>
Red Hand Commandos	8	6	<b>-25.0%</b>	4	1	<b>-75%</b>
starry plough	34	21	<b>-38.2%</b>	26	28	<b>+7.7%</b>
UDA	19	11	<b>-42.1%</b>	28	12	<b>-57.1%</b>
UFF	21	13	<b>-38.1%</b>	15	10	<b>-33.3%</b>
UVF	68	32	<b>-52.9%</b>	42	28	<b>-33.3%</b>
UVF Somme	1	0	<b>-100%</b>	0	0	<b>-</b>
YCV	39	14	<b>-64.1%</b>	37	21	<b>-43.2%</b>
sunburst	0	1	<b>-</b>	0	0	<b>-</b>
UYM	3	1	<b>-66.6%</b>	0	0	<b>-</b>
LVF	3	3	<b>0</b>	2	0	<b>-100%</b>
IRSP	0	0	<b>-</b>	3	3	<b>0</b>
Other	1	2	<b>+100%</b>	3	3	<b>0</b>
Total	212	122	<b>-42.5%</b>	173	118	<b>-31.8%</b>

- Given the small number of items involved, it is difficult to make clear judgements about the differences in removal rates between years.
- The removal rate for UDA items appears to be higher than in the previous year.
- There are lower removal rates for YCV and UVF items than in 2007.
- There are more starry plough flags remaining at the end of summer 2008 than summer 2007 and an overall increase in this flag over the summer months.

**Rates of removal by nationalist/republican and unionist/loyalist (not including symbols not classified as neither)**

	Unionist removal 2008			Nationalist removal 2008		
	2008 R1 Frequency	2008 round 2 total	% change between rounds	2008 R1 Frequency	2008 round 2 total	% change between rounds
national	2481	1118	<b>-54.9%</b>	92	90	<b>-2.2%</b>
regional	1549	583	<b>-62.3%</b>	2	3	<b>+50%</b>
paramilitary	129	73	<b>-43.4%</b>	44	45	<b>+2.2%</b>
sport	38	14	<b>-63.2%</b>	248	978	<b>+294.4%</b>
commemorative	109	31	<b>-71.6%</b>	42	40	<b>-4.8%%</b>
Loyal Order	251	54	<b>-78.5%</b>	0	0	
political party/ statement	2	4	<b>+100%</b>	14	19	<b>+35.7%</b>
Other	12	6	<b>-50%</b>	17	17	<b>0%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>4571</b>	<b>1883</b>	<b>-58.8%</b>	<b>459</b>	<b>1192</b>	<b>+159.6%</b>

- These figures show the impact of the number of flags put up in Tyrone for the GAA final on the overall total.
- Without these extra flags, the pattern of removal closely resembles that of previous years.

## Levels of Political Symbol Display and Rates of Removal Across Northern Ireland From 2006 – 2008.

### Total number of items in Survey Rounds 1 and 2, 2006 - 2008

	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
R1 total	4519	4629	5055
R2 total	2685	1793	3113
Overall removal rate	-40.6%	-61.3%	-38.4%

- On first inspection it would appear that removal rates between census rounds fluctuate dramatically from year to year
- Specifically there would appear to be a marked increase in removal in 2007 and a return to the previous rate in 2008
- The year by year analysis below suggests that these figures mask a relatively stable rate of removal of unionist/loyalist symbols and a greater degree of fluctuation among nationalist/republican symbol display.

**2006 Survey: Rates of removal by nationalist/republican and unionist/loyalist (not including symbols classified as neither)**

	Unionist removal 2006			Nationalist removal 2006		
	2006 R1 Frequency	2006 round 2 total	% change between rounds	2006 R1 Frequency	2006 round 2 total	% change between rounds
national	1905	943	<b>-50.5%</b>	84	224	<b>+166.7%</b>
regional	1490	622	<b>-58.3%</b>	4	7	<b>+75.0%</b>
paramilitary	220	166	<b>-24.5%</b>	17	29	<b>+70.6%</b>
sport	22	13	<b>-40.9%</b>	106	110	<b>+3.8%</b>
commemorative	122	57	<b>-53.3%</b>	161	354	<b>+119.9%</b>
Loyal Order	268	56	<b>-79.1%</b>			
political party/ statement	1	2	<b>+100%</b>	42	53	<b>+26.2%</b>
Other	59	34	<b>-42.4%</b>	4	7	<b>+75%</b>
Total	4087	1893	<b>-53.7%</b>	418	784	<b>+87.6%</b>

- Overall in 2006 the total level of political symbolism declined by 41% over the summer period leaving 2677 nationalist/republican and unionist/loyalist items in place by September
- This was due to a 54% removal rate of unionist/loyalist symbolism and an 88% increase in nationalist/republican symbolism
- Among unionist items:
  - The high rate of commemorative items accompanied the 90 year anniversary of the Battle of the Somme
  - The highest rate of removal was among Loyal Order symbolism, indicated the more tightly regulated display of these items.
  - Substantial removal rates were also present among the national and regional categories indicating the prevalence of the use of national and regional flags in the summer months. However, large numbers of these remained
  - The lowest rates of removal were among paramilitary items indicating both the higher number of permanent (mural) displays in this category as well as the more permanent and territorial nature of these displays

- Among nationalist items:
  - Substantial increases in national, paramilitary and commemorative symbolism constituted displays commemorating the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Hunger Strikes
  - The persistence of sporting items also reflects the GAA sporting calendar

**2007 Survey: Rates of removal by nationalist/republican and unionist/loyalist (not including symbols classified as neither)**

	Unionist removal 2007			Nationalist removal 2007		
	2007 R1 Frequency	2007 round 2 total	% change between rounds	2007 R1 Frequency	2007 round 2 total	% change between rounds
national	2193	694	<b>-68.4%</b>	99	59	<b>-40.4%</b>
regional	1525	560	<b>-63.3%</b>	5	1	<b>-80.0%</b>
paramilitary	163	82	<b>-49.7%</b>	49	40	<b>-18.4%</b>
sport	34	24	<b>-29.4%</b>	78	148	<b>+89.7%</b>
commemorative	37	20	<b>-45.9%</b>	40	31	<b>-22.5%</b>
Loyal Order	250	44	<b>-82.4%</b>			
political party/ statement	4	6	<b>+50.0%</b>	15	12	<b>-20.0%</b>
Other	107	47	<b>-56.1%</b>	15	14	<b>-6.7%</b>
Total	4313	1477	<b>-65.8%</b>	301	305	<b>+1.3%</b>

- In 2007 there was an increase in the total number of symbols counted, though this is thought to reflect having the survey closer to the 12<sup>th</sup> July
- The overall removal rate was much higher though, at 61% and the total number of remaining items was lower, at 1793.
- For unionist items
  - The rates of removal had increased on the previous year to 66% between the two census dates
  - This was mainly due to a more substantial removal of national and regional symbols
  - The rate of removal for loyalist paramilitary items was substantially greater at about 50%
- For nationalist items:
  - There were a lower number of nationalist/republican emblems, reflecting the occurrence of the Hunger Strike commemoration in the previous year.

- Levels of display remained much the same between census dates, with a decline in national items being compensated by an increase in sporting items
- The increase in sporting emblems coincided with success in the GAA championship

**2008 Survey: Rates of removal by nationalist/republican and unionist/loyalist (not including symbols classified as neither)**

	Unionist removal 2008			Nationalist removal 2008		
	2008 R1 Frequency	2008 round 2 total	% change between rounds	2008 R1 Frequency	2008 round 2 total	% change between rounds
national	2481	1118	-54.9%	92	90	-2.2%
regional	1549	583	-62.3%	2	3	+50%
paramilitary	129	73	-43.4%	44	45	+2.2%
sport	38	14	-63.2%	248	978	+294.4%
commemorative	109	31	-71.6%	42	40	-4.8%
Loyal Order	251	54	-78.5%	0	0	=
political party/ statement	2	4	+100%	14	19	+35.7%
Other	12	6	-50%	17	17	0%
Total	4571	1883	-58.8%	459	1192	+159.6%

- There was an increase in the total number of items displayed in 2008 compared to the previous years.
- This is again partly attributable to the proximity of the survey to the 12<sup>th</sup> July.
- The overall rate of removal declined to 38%, but this is attributable to changes in the proportion of nationalist flags being erected over the summer.
- For unionist items:
  - The proportions of items displayed in each category remained much the same as in previous years
  - The rates of removal also remained similar for each category and the overall removal rate is close to previous years
  - The removal rate for paramilitary items has dropped slightly (43% as opposed to 50% in 2007).
- For nationalist items
  - National, regional and paramilitary items showed little change over the summer.

- The most substantial increase was among sporting flags which reflects Tyrone winning the GAA All Ireland championship.
- This volume of 730 flags is largely responsible for the lower overall rate of removal in 2008.

## Comparison of removal rates for unionist and nationalist items 2006-2008

	Unionist removal 2006-2008			Nationalist removal 2006 – 2008		
	2006 removal	2007 removal	2008 removal	2006 removal	2007 removal	2008 removal
national	-50.5%	-68.4%	-54.9%	+166.7%	-40.4%	-2.2%
regional	-58.3%	-63.3%	-62.3%	+75.0%	-80.0%	+50%
paramilitary	-24.5%	-49.7%	-43.4%	+70.6%	-18.4%	+2.2%
sport	-40.9%	-29.4%	-63.2%	+3.8%	+89.7%	+294.4%
commemorative	-53.3%	-45.9%	-71.6%	+119.9%	-22.5%	-4.8%%
Loyal Order	-79.1%	-82.4%	-78.5%			
political party/ statement	+100%	+50.0%	+100%	+26.2%	-20.0%	+35.7%
Other	-42.4%	-56.1%	-50%	+75%	-6.7%	0%
Total	-53.7%	-65.8%	-58.8%	+87.6%	+1.3%	+159.6%

- Removal rates for unionist items remain quite stable between 54% and 66%.
- Removal rates of loyalist paramilitary items have shown improvement since 2006.
- Nationalist rates of display and removal reflect contemporary sporting and commemorative occasions.
- The number of republican paramilitary items has increased and their rate of removal has decreased, though it must be borne in mind that the Autumn census takes place very soon after a number of republican commemorative events.

## **Conclusion**

The results for 2008 are in many ways notable for a lack of change rather than anything significantly new. The political environment is probably as good as it has been for many years and there were no obvious incidents that might have raised tensions between communities. The success of Tyrone GAA in winning the All Ireland led to widespread displays in September in that county and it should be noted that in November, outside our survey period, there were a number of 'Home-Coming' parades by the Royal Irish Regiment (RIR) which resulted in a range of flags and other items being displayed. In Belfast RIR flags were put up in loyalist areas and, following the American tradition, yellow ribbons displayed, although the displays were usually on items of street furniture. For both the Tyrone and RIR events some flags on lampposts have remained visible into 2009.

There was some reduction in paramilitary flags although not a substantial one. In the July survey there were 212 paramilitary emblems in 2007 and only 173 in 2008 however by September there were 122 paramilitary emblems still displayed in 2007 and 118 in 2008. Given that the number displayed at Easter 2008 was 112 this shows a remarkably consistent level of paramilitary displays over the 12 month period. Some of these are murals and may also be flag displays connected to memorials. But at any time of the year there remain a large number of paramilitary displays on heavily used arterial routes in Northern Ireland.

The Easter survey revealed some interesting findings. This survey was added to capture the range of displays during a Republican commemorative period. In 2008 St Patrick's Day was also very close to Easter. Given this one might expect to find a higher proportion of Republican and Nationalist symbols. However, there were 537 unionist and loyalist symbols compared to 228 nationalist and republican symbols. A large percentage of these are flags that clearly remain flying all year round.

Perhaps the most important and striking figures, given the aims of the *Joint Flags Protocol*, are the rates of removal in September. In nationalist and republican areas we have found increased numbers of flags in the September period due to it being adjacent to particular events. In 2006 it was the twenty fifth anniversary of the Hunger Strike (87.6% increase in displays), in 2007 there was no significant event (1.3% increase) and in 2008 the success of the Tyrone GAA team saw a huge increase in sporting displays (160%). However, given the numbers involved and the length of time that has elapsed since the July survey, the numbers of loyalist and unionists symbols left up in September remains consistently significant. The removal rate increased from 53.7% in 2006 to 65.8% in 2007 but slipped back again in 2008 to 58.8%.

Put very bluntly, a large range of loyalist and unionist flags are put up in May, June and July of which a good proportion are still on display in October and beyond. At the end of September 2008 there were still 1883 items reflecting unionism and loyalism on arterial routes. We are aware that in certain key areas in Belfast – Sandy Row, Newtownards Road, the Shankill – displays were taken down in October but this still means that in some cases displays were up for nearly five months. In addition, in all of these areas the summer displays were later replaced by RIR flags in November.

## **Attitudes**

It is important to remember that this is a survey on the displays of emblems in public space. It does not directly reveal the attitudes to these symbols. However, the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey have run a wide range of questions on displays of flags in 2006 and 2007 (<http://www.ark.ac.uk/nilt/>). These surveys have shown a reduction in the sense of intimidation felt by people to both loyalist and republican murals, kerb paintings or flags although 14% of people had felt intimidated by republican displays in 2007 and 18% by loyalist displays.

An overwhelming number of people 82% in 2006 and 84% in 2007 said they did not support the flying of flags in their area. When asked about their

willingness to shop in an area displaying loyalist or republican flags, 38% said they were less willing and 4% more willing when loyalist flags are displayed and 44% were less willing and only 4% more willing to shop when republican flags are displayed. These displays appear to make an economic difference.

One of the reasons for this appears to be the number of people that believe that flags are put up by paramilitary groups. When offered a range of choices 64% suggested paramilitary groups are sometimes responsible for the displays of Union flags on lampposts and 63% identified paramilitary groups as sometimes responsible for putting up Tricolours.

We can conclude that whilst the levels of threat in Northern Ireland society have reduced, territorial demarcation of the sort that we have surveyed still makes a significant difference to people's lives.

## **Joint Protocol in Relations to the Display of Flags in Public Areas**

In relation to the above evidence it is worth looking at the aims of the Protocol set up to look at the issues of flags flown in public spaces. The following are the joint aims:

### **2.0 JOINT AIMS**

- 2.1 To improve the environment by removing the display of paramilitary flags or flags of a sectarian nature.
- 2.2 To develop a partnership approach, which allows the agencies involved to impact on the flags issue in a cohesive manner.
- 2.3 To develop a strategic and graduated response to the flags issue which involves consultation, shared understanding, negotiation and, if necessary, proportionate and legal use of enforcement methods.
- 2.4 To provide a proactive approach, with the support of communities and their representatives, to address:
  - The removal of all flags and emblems from arterial routes and town centres;
  - The removal of all paramilitary flags and displays;

- The control of displays of flags and emblems in particular areas: e.g.: mixed and interface areas and near buildings such as schools, hospitals, places of worship and community halls;
- Flag flying should be limited to particular times and particular dates; and that:
  - where flags are displayed for a festive or other occasion, that the display is reasonably time-bounded and that:
  - flags, including plastic ties, tape and poles, should be removed by the community after the agreed period;
- To encourage communities to accept that flags displayed which are tattered and torn or discoloured do not enhance the environment and should be removed.

In previous reports we have discussed issues raised by 2.2 and 2.3 as to the best approaches to dealing with the removal of flags. The recent survey does offer us some insight into the effectiveness of 2.1 and 2.4. Since our first survey in 2006 there has been some reduction in paramilitary displays. Nevertheless, paramilitary displays remain common in certain areas. Further, the aims set out in 2.4 are not close to being achieved. There is no evidence of the 'removal of all flags and emblems from arterial routes and town centres'. There are many examples of flags around 'mixed and interface areas and near buildings such as schools, hospitals, places of worship and community halls'. And whilst there has been some effort to remove displays, making them 'time-bound', this has often been into October and our Easter survey revealed a large amount of material that had remained in place throughout the winter.

## **Summary**

- The 2008 survey showed little change in terms of the numbers and types of displays in public spaces in Northern Ireland.
- The rate of removal of flags and other displays in September was not as high as it had been in 2007.
- The Easter survey revealed a large number of items that had been on display throughout the winter so that, even at Easter, a traditionally

republican commemorative period, there were higher levels of loyalist and unionist displays on arterial routes and in town centres.