

**Flags Monitoring Project
2007 Report**

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Introduction

In 2005 the Institute of Irish Studies published the first overview of the issue of flag flying in Northern Ireland *Transforming Conflict: Flags and Emblems* (<http://www.asharedfutureni.gov.uk>). In 2006 the Institute of Irish Studies conducted two comprehensive surveys of the displays of flags and emblems. The first survey was undertaken in the first week in July 2006, the second in the middle of September 2006. The methodology and results from the 2006 survey can be found in *Flags Monitoring Report: Preliminary Findings* (<http://www.asharedfutureni.gov.uk>).

This report covering the surveys conducted in 2007 should be read in conjunction with these two previous reports. The methodology used in 2006 was repeated and the results are compared in the pages that follow.

The occurrence of public displays of political symbolism in Northern Ireland is a psychologically, culturally and politically complex phenomenon and researching this topic requires a sophisticated conceptual and methodological approach. Our core concerns are to produce findings which build upon the previous research we have conducted in this area, which are accurate and valid representations of current flag flying practices and which will form the basis for the continued monitoring of the flags issue over the coming years.

Summary

The 2007 census of political symbols along arterial routes replicated the census of the previous summer. The overall pattern is one of consistency with the 2006 results. The most frequently displayed symbols were again the flags of the Union and Northern Ireland, which were displayed in the same proportions as in the previous summer and in the same manner, predominantly from lampposts.

Although there was an increase in 2007 from 2006 in the number of symbols recorded in round 1, this is most likely due to the first round running slightly closer to the 12th itself and capturing more of the symbols displayed coming up to the day itself. This interpretation is supported by the round 2 figures which show many fewer new symbols being displayed between the two rounds. Overall, though our results suggest that there was a greater rate of removal of symbols over the summer in 2007, resulting in a lower final total of symbols remaining in September, there was no significant reduction in the number of flags being flown on arterial routes in Northern Ireland through the summer months.

Main findings from round 1:

- The total number of symbols recorded was 4631 as opposed to 4136 in 2006
- The form and display of these symbols were however very consistent with the previous year
 - Symbols were predominantly Union and Northern Ireland flags, hung from lampposts, in the same proportions as in 2006
 - Sporting, Loyal Order, and paramilitary emblems held to much the same proportions as in 2006
- There were some minor variations from 2006:
 - More flags were being hung from private houses and public buildings;
 - Fewer bannerettes were displayed;
 - An increase in the display of the Scottish Saltire;
 - Commemorative emblems were much less frequent this year, reflecting the coincidence of the 90th anniversary of the Somme the 25th anniversary of the 1981 Hungerstrike last year;
 - There is a slight increase in Starry Plough flags, but otherwise paramilitary symbols remain much the same as in 2006.

Main findings from round 2:

- The round two findings also parallel the findings from the 2006 survey in terms of what is typically removed and what remains
- However, **overall there is a greater rate of removal of symbols between census dates this year: 61%** as compared to 40% last year

- There is also a **lower total number of political symbols remaining**: 1808 this year as compared to 2499 last year.
- This is mainly due to a better removal of Union and Northern Ireland flags, though there is evidence of better removal of most different forms and categories of symbol.
- The removal of Loyal Order symbols remains most thorough at 81%.
- Paramilitary removal has generally improved across the board with a greater proportion removed and a lower absolute total of items remaining this year (118 this year as opposed to 161 in 2006).
- There has been an increase in sporting emblems displayed, mainly due to a large number of GAA flags displayed over the summer.

2007 Round One Findings

These figures were collected between the 29th June and the 10th of July 2007. In 2006 we had noted that in many areas, emblems were being put up in the week previous to the 12th. Accordingly, this year we moved the data collection towards this date, ending on the 10th July rather than the 9th as in 2006. Anecdotally researchers reported that this year more last-minute preparations for the 12th were encountered, especially on private housing and so we expect a higher level of symbols recorded than in the previous year, but in turn we also expect a lower level of new items going up in the interim between recording dates and a higher rate of removal.

Note: For full discussion of methodology please refer to *Flags Monitoring Report: Preliminary Findings* (<http://www.asharedfutureni.gov.uk>).

Forms of symbols

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

Symbol	2006 <i>Frequency</i>	2006 <i>Percentage of total</i>	2007 Frequency	2007 Percentage of total
arch	20	0.5	27	0.6
bannerette	134	3.2	80	1.7
bunting	66	1.6	82	1.8
flag	3638	88.0	4097	88.5
graffiti	14	0.3	35	.8
kerbstones	25	0.6	44	1.0
lamppost	32	0.8	79	1.7
mural	84	2.0	79	1.7
placard	76	1.8	43	0.9
other	47	0.2	65	1.4
Total	4136	100.0	4631	100.0

The first round of the 2007 census recorded 4631 different political symbols along arterial routes and town centres across Northern Ireland. This is an increase of 450 from last year's figure of 4136. If we look at the forms of different symbols in 2007, we see that the pattern is one of consistency between years. Though there is an increase in the number of flags and emblems recorded in 2007, it is very apparent that the proportion of each type of emblem remains steady between the two years.

Some variations between years are notable.

- Only 80 bannerettes were noted this year compared to 134 last year. This constitutes a substantial drop in the overall proportion of this form of symbol from 3.2% to 1.7%. The decline is possibly due to the occurrence of the 90th Anniversary of the Somme in 2006 which was often represented in bannerette form.
- Likewise placards have declined from 76 (1.8%) of the total to 43 (0.9%) and similarly is attributable to the Anniversary of the 1981 Hungerstrike in 2006 which was often represented in placard form.
- Kerbstones and lampposts and graffiti show an increase in frequency in 2007, but this is a small increment in terms of the overall total.

Manner of Display

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

Display	2006 frequency	2006 %	2007 frequency	2007 %
arch	19	.5	73	1.6
building	303	7.3	236	5.1
bunting-style	19	.5	35	.8
flagpole	74	1.8	137	3.0
lamppost	3438	83.1	3485	75.3
mural	14	.3	83	1.8
private house	176	4.3	439	9.5
stand alone	85	2.1	81	1.7
other	8	.2	62	1.3
Total	4136	100.0	4631	100.0

- The most substantial increase in manner of display is in flags flown from private houses from 176 (4.3%) in 2006 to 439 (9.5%) in 2007. As noted above this may reflect that the survey occurred slightly closer to the 12th July celebrations and could suggest that people in private residences tend to fly flags for shorter periods beforehand. However the size of the increase suggests that this form of flag display is becoming more popular.
- Likewise the use of flagpoles to display flags has increased from 74 (1.8%) in 2006 to 137 (3%) this year.
- The proportions of emblems displayed from murals, arches and bunting-style (between lampposts) would appear to have increased on the previous year.

New and old emblems

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

Form of Symbol	Total old 2006	% of each symbol old 2006	Total old 2007	2007 % of each symbol old
arch	1	5.0	2	7.4
bannerette	0	0	0	0
bunting	2	3.0	1	1.2
flag	178	4.9	176	4.3
graffiti	4	28.6	21	60.0
kerbstones	11	44.0	15	34.1
lamppost	16	50.0	16	20.3
placard	10	13.2	12	25.9
(other)	39		33	
Total	261	6.3	276	6.0

- Overall the number and proportions of symbols which are visibly old remain much the same as in 2006
- Graffiti, kerbstones and lampposts have the highest proportion of old items and there has been an increase in the amount of old graffiti recorded.
- The proportion of flags which are old remains much the same as in the previous year.

Categorising Symbols

Symbols were again categorised using the system devised in 2006.

Symbol category	Frequency (2006)	Percentage of total (2006)	Frequency	Percentage of total
national	1827	44.2	2292	49.5
regional	1385	33.5	1530	33.0
paramilitary	194	4.7	209	4.5
sport	114	2.8	112	2.4
commemorative	263	6.4	76	1.6
Loyal Order	232	5.6	250	5.4
political party/statement	41	1.0	18	.4
other	80	1.9	144	3.1
Total	4136	100	4631	100.0

- The proportions of symbols in each category remain much the same as in 2006.
- In 2007 national and regional symbols together accounted for 82.5% of the total.
- This represents a slight increase on last year's proportion of 77.7% reflecting a slight increase in the proportion of national emblems being used.
- There is a substantial decline in the proportion of commemorative emblems from 6.4% of the total in 2006 to 1.6% of the 2007 total, reflecting the occurrence of the two major anniversaries (of the Somme and the 1981 Hungerstrike) in 2006.
- Political party emblems and political statements have also decreased.

National emblems

Breaking these categories down to look at each in turn, national symbols remained in much the same proportions as in the previous year.

	Frequency 2006	% of national symbols total	Frequency 2007	% of national symbols total
England	2	.1	14	.6
green white orange	7	.4	13	.6
red white blue	101	5.5	166	7.2
Scottish Saltire	102	5.6	190	8.3
Royal Standard Scotland	0		1	
Irish Tricolour	68	3.7	79	3.4
Union	1545	84.6	1791	78.1
Other	2	.1	38	1.7
Total	1827	100.0	2292	100.0

- The Union flag and red, white and blue colours remain the most popular national symbols
- The Scottish flag of St Andrew has increased in popularity, almost doubling in number from 2006 and now constituting 8.3% of the total national emblems
- England flags also appear to be more frequently displayed, though the overall numbers remain very small.

Regional symbols

	2006 frequency	% of total	2007 frequency	% of total
Independent Ulster	10	.7	15	1.0
Northern Ireland	1310	94.6	1465	95.8
Shield and Union	27	1.9	9	.6
Six Counties	8	.6	4	.3
Ulster Scots	23	1.7	17	1.1
St.Patrick's	1	.1	0	0
red hand	2	.1	6	.4
Four Provinces	2	.1	3	.2
other	2	.1	11	.7
Total	1385	100.0	1530	100.0

- Although there is an increase in frequency from 2006, the proportions of different regional emblems remains remarkably consistent
- The most popular regional symbol remains the Northern Ireland flag
- There is some decrease in the use of the 'shield and union' flag

Paramilitary emblems

	2006 frequency	% of total	2007 frequency	% of total
IRA/ dissident IRA	8	4.1%	12	5.7
Red Hand Commandos	9	4.6%	8	3.8
Starry plough	9	4.6%	34	16.3
UDA	21	10.8%	18	8.6
UFF	29	14.9%	21	10.0
UVF	70	36.1%	67	32.1
(UVF Somme)	(10)		(1)	
YCV	43	22.2%	39	18.7
UYM	2	1.0%	3	1.4
LVF	1	0.5%	3	1.4
Other	2	1.0%	3	1.4
Total	194	100%	209	100.0

- Overall the numbers and proportions of paramilitary symbols remain much the same as in 2006
- IRA, UVF and YCV symbols remain at the same levels and make up the same proportion of the total
- This year, there would appear to be a slight decrease in UDA/UFF symbols –from 50 symbols in 2006 (25.7% of total paramilitary symbols) to 41 symbols in 2007 (18.6%)
- There is an increase in the number of Starry Plough flags from 9 in 2006 (4.6% of total) to 34 (16.3%) in 2007

Loyal Order Emblems

	2006 Frequency	2006 %	2007 Frequency	2007 %
Orange	173	74.1	203	80.2
Apprentice Boys	3	1.3	3	1.2
Other 'Loyal Orders'	56	24.1	44	17.2
Total	232	100	250	100

- Again, the symbols of the Orange Order dominate this category
- There was a slight increase in the number of Orange symbols displayed
- Proportions of Orange, Apprentice Boys and other Loyal Order emblems remain similar across both years.

Geographical dispersal of political symbols

District Council	<i>Total number of political symbols 2006</i>	<i>Percentage of Total 2006</i>	Total number of political symbols 2007	Percentage of Total 2007
Antrim	52	1.3	148	3.2
Ards	183	4.4	255	5.5
Armagh	143	3.5	73	1.6
Ballymena	137	3.3	218	4.7
Ballymoney	34	0.8	67	1.4
Banbridge	134	3.2	98	2.1
Belfast	996	24.1	1188	25.7
Carrickfergus	67	1.6	60	1.3
Castlereagh	86	2.1	48	1.0
Coleraine	187	4.5	233	5.0
Cookstown	58	1.4	80	1.7
Craigavon	317	7.7	207	4.5
Derry/Londonderry	233	5.6	261	5.6
Down	206	5.0	47	1.0
Dungannon	89	2.2	117	2.5
Fermanagh	144	3.5	143	3.1
Larne	83	2.0	126	2.7
Limavady	79	1.9	124	2.7
Lisburn	371	9.0	507	10.9
Magherafelt	147	3.6	105	2.3
Moyle	62	1.5	80	1.7
Newry and Mourne	131	3.2	207	4.5
Newtownabbey	65	1.6	89	1.9
North Down	13	.3	35	.8
Omagh	32	.8	51	1.1
Strabane	87	2.1	64	1.4
Total	4136	100.0	4631	100.0

Although the overall total of political symbols counted in 2007 was larger than in the previous year, there were decreases in some areas

- Armagh, Banbridge, Castlereagh, Craigavon, Down, Magherafelt and Strabane all showed substantial decreases in the total number of symbols displayed and in the proportion each area contributed to the overall total of symbols
- The urban areas of Belfast and Derry/Londonderry showed increases much in line with the overall increased total of political symbols
- Areas such as Antrim, Ballymena, Newry & Mourne and Lisburn showed substantial increases in overall numbers as well as increases in proportion to other areas.
- These variations could be because the venues for Twelfth of July parades vary on a year by year basis.

Geographical distribution of paramilitary symbols in round one survey

District Council	Number paramilitary symbols 2006 (round1)	Percentage of total 2006	Total number of paramilitary symbols 2007	Percentage of total 2007
Antrim	1	.5	0	0
Ards	17	8.8	3	1.4
Armagh	6	3.1	3	1.4
Ballymena	2	1.0	3	1.4
Ballymoney	0	0	0	0
Banbridge	1	.5	1	.5
Belfast	94	48.5	135	64.6
Carrickfergus	8	4.1	1	.5
Castlereagh	0	0	2	1.0
Coleraine	9	4.6	0	0
Cookstown	1	.5	5	2.4
Craigavon	1	.5	0	0
Derry/Londonderry	14	7.2	17	8.1
Down	10	5.2	1	.5
Dungannon	0	0	0	0
Fermanagh	2	1.0	1	.5
Larne	5	2.6	6	2.9
Limavady	0	0	0	0
Lisburn	0	0	4	1.9
Magherafelt	3	1.5	0	0
Moyle	4	2.1	0	0
Newry and Mourne	6	3.1	12	5.7
Newtownabbey	8	4.1	6	2.9
North Down	1	.5	5	2.4
Omagh	0	0	0	0
Strabane	1	.5	4	1.9
Total	194	100.0	209	100

- Despite an overall increase in paramilitary symbols, most areas evidenced a decrease in numbers in spring 2007
- Substantial decreases are notable in Ards, Carrickfergus, Coleraine and Down
- The increase in paramilitary symbols in Belfast accounts for most of the difference between the years, with an additional 41 being noted in 2007
- There are also some increases in the areas of, for example, Newry and Mourne, North Down and Cookstown, though these are much smaller in number.

2007 Round Two Findings

Form of display

If we first examine the changes in symbols displayed between the first and second rounds of the 2007 census, we can see that this year many fewer new symbols were erected between census dates (404 as compared to 1052 in the previous year). This supports the suggestion above that the slightly later date of the first census round meant that more of the 12th July symbols were recorded before the event this year.

	2007 round 1 total	Number of items coming down	% of original items removed	Number of new items erected	2007 round 2 total	% change between rounds
arch	27	25	92.6%	0	2	-92.6%
bannerette	80	80	100%	0	0	-100%
bunting	82	61	74.4%	3	25	-69.5%
flag	4097	2957	72.2%	327	1510	-63.1%
graffiti	35	6	17.1%	2	31	-11.4%
kerbstones	44	12	44.3%	1	33	-25.0%
lamppost	79	35	25.9%	3	47	-59.5%
mural	79	16	20.3%	1	64	-19.0%
placard	43	13	30.2%	7	37	-14.0%
other	65	17	26.6%	8	37	-43.1%
Total	4631	3227	69.7%	404	1808	-61.0%

- Overall there was a 61% decrease in symbols between the two census dates
- In effect our records indicate that 70% of the original items were removed but an additional 9% erected in the interim.
- All types of emblem evidenced a decrease between rounds, for bannerettes and arches this was almost 100%

If we compare the level of removal between 2006 and 2007 we see that firstly the absolute number of symbols remaining is lower than in the previous year (1808 as opposed to 2499) and that for each type of symbol, the proportion of items removed is larger.

	2006 Round 1 total	2006 Round 2 total	Change 2006	2007 Round 1 total	2007 Round 2 total	Change 2007
arch	20	3	-85.0%	27	2	-92.6%
bannerette	134	72	-46.3%	80	0	-100%
bunting	66	51	-22.7%	82	25	-69.5%
flag	3638	2025	-44.3%	4097	1510	-63.1%
graffiti	14	20	+42.9%	35	31	-11.4%
kerbstones	25	37	+48.0%	44	33	-25.0%
lamppost	32	60	+87.5%	79	47	-59.5%
mural	84	91	+8.3%	79	64	-19.0%
placard	76	80	+5.3%	43	37	-14.0%
other	47	60	+50%	65	37	-43.1%
Total	4136	2499	-39.6%	4631	1808	-61.0%

- While graffiti, kerbstones, lampposts, murals and placards had all increased over the summer of 2006, they have decreased in 2007
- For flags, the largest category of emblems, the rate of removal has increased from 44.3% in 2006 to 63.1% in 2007

Manner of display

If we examine the rates of removal for the different ways in which the symbols are displayed, we can see that the patterns of removal have changed somewhat from 2006

How displayed	2006 Round 1 total	2006 Round 2 total	Change 2006	2007 Round 1 total	2007 Round 2 total	Change 2007
On arch	19	7	-63.2%	73	4	-94.5%
On building	303	284	-6.3%	236	146	-38.1%
Displayed bunting-style	19	5	-73.7%	35	8	-77.1%
On flagpole	74	89	+20.2%	137	66	-51.8%
On lamppost	3438	1930	-43.9%	3485	1309	-62.4%
On mural	14	17	+21.4%	83	56	-32.5%
On private house	176	64	-63.7%	439	97	-77.9%
Stand alone	85	91	+7.1%	81	65	-19.8%
Other	8	12	+50%	62	57	-8.1%
Total	4136	2499	-40.3%	4631	1808	-61.0%

- Rates of removal for buildings and private houses have increased on the previous year
- While the number of flags displayed on flagpoles increased over the summer of 2006 (+20.2%), they decreased substantially over the summer of 2007 (-51.8%)
- The largest number of emblems displayed each year was flags from lamppost and the rates of removal for these emblems are also improved from 43.9% in 2006 to 62.4% coming down over the summer of 2007.

Symbol categories

	2006 Round 1 total	2006 Round 2 total	Change 2006	2007 Round 1 total	2007 Round 2 total	Change 2007
national	1827	1102	-39.7%	2292	766	-66.6%
regional	1385	595	-57.0%	1530	562	-63.3%
paramilitary	194	161	-17.0%	209	118	-43.5%
sport	114	107	-6.1%	112	172	+54.5%
commemorative	263	381	+44.9%	76	51	-32.9%
Loyal Order	232	53	-77.2%	250	48	-80.8%
political party/statement	41	51	+24.4%	18	18	0
other	80	49	-38.8%	144	73	-49.3%
Total	4136	2499	-39.6%	4631	1808	-61.0%

- Again, the proportion of emblems removed in most categories is higher in 2007 than in the previous year
- This is particularly the case for commemorative emblems as expected given the commemorations in 2006
- It is also the case for paramilitary emblems which evidences a higher rate of removal over the summer months (44% as opposed to 17% in 2006) as well as a lower absolute total of paramilitary emblems remaining (118 as opposed to 161 in 2006)
- One exception to this general pattern is sporting emblems which show an increase over the summer of 2007

National symbols

	2006 Round 1 total	2006 Round 2 total	Change 2006	2007 Round 1 total	2007 Round 2 total	Change 2007
England	2	1	-50%	14	13	-7.1%
green white orange	7	5	-28.6%	13	9	-30.8%
red white blue	101	111	+10.1%	166	95	-42.8%
Scottish Saltire (Royal Standard)	102	45	-54.1%	190 (+1)	72 (0)	-62.1%
Tricolour	68	199	+192.7%	79	45	-43.0%
Union	1545	734	-52.4%	1791	519	-70.8%
other	2	7	-50%	38	13	-71.0%
Total	1827	1102	-39.7%	2292	766	-66.6%

- 66.6% of national emblems were removed by the end of the second census in 2007
- For most national emblems the increased level of display at the start of the summer in 2007 is match by an increased rate of removal.
- This is marginally less so for 'red, white and blue' colours, but it should be borne in mind that these are often painted on kerbstones and lampposts, making removal more difficult
- Nationalist symbols also show some evidence of removal over the summer, perhaps reflecting the end of a longer term removal process from Republican occasions such as Easter commemorations.

