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Cymru/Wales

Meet Chloe: life as a Welsh Trans person in 2025

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The more I talk with cis people on the left, the more I realise how out of touch they are with the realities faced by the trans community. Whenever the discrimination we face enters conversations, a chorus of voices responds to tell everyone that “the left” needs to “prioritise working class issues” and not be “distracted” from “genuine material concerns”. In the interest of educating cis comrades who’ve been misled by this framing, today we’re going to use a mix of studies, surveys and anecdotal evidence to explore the life of the average trans person in Wales. Let’s see how well the picture of trans people as comfortable middle class ideologues holds up to scrutiny...

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Meet Chloe, a trans woman in her mid twenties. There’s about a 25% chance that she’s already been homeless at some point in her life, and if she has, then the cause is very likely to be familial rejection. It’s important not to under-estimate the seriousness of living with a transphobic family, since even without the extremes of conversion therapy, torture and physical abuse such situations routinely cause conditions like CPTSD (which studies show can seriously impact life expectancy). Housing emergencies of this kind are not unusual in the transgender community, and people in such situations often travel relatively far from where they grew up in order to stay with supportive friends. Chloe could have been born anywhere in Wales, but it’s relatively likely she moved to somewhere like Cardiff or Aberystwyth some time between the age of sixteen and twenty. Cardiff in particular is known as a “trans-flight” city because, despite all its faults, it’s a place with an active trans community that regularly shelters people fleeing discrimination.

When and if Chloe finds less precarious housing, there’s still a 48% chance it is unsuitable for habitation in some way: the flat she lives in might have mould and repair issues, inadequate disability accommodations or a lack of usable space. In 2023, research from the British Medical Journal showed that trans people disproportionately live in areas of socioeconomic deprivation. My experience is that trans housing tends to be very crowded, and while the tenancy agreement may show two or three occupants, it’s likely there are four or five people sleeping there on any given night. Chloe probably met her housemates on an online platform like discord or a dating app, through mutual friends, or at a local trans community meetup. These arrangements can forge tight community bonds and create lifelong friends, but they can also create extremely precarious or even volatile housing situations: moving in with people that you met very recently carries certain risks, and a falling-out, breakup or other dispute might end up putting you back out on the street. The worst will likely come from outside, however, since (in addition to taking a large proportion of her income in rent) Chloe’s landlord or letting agent is relatively likely (about a 25% chance according to one survey) to actively discriminate against her. Landlords might refuse to communicate with Chloe, berate or sexually harass her during surprise inspections, or kick her out without warning. Finding a safe and stable home as a trans person can be an enormous challenge, especially when estranged parents refuse to act as guarantors or help you find four months worth of rent-in-advance.

Chloe has almost certainly struggled to find employment. Census data shows that, when compared to their cis counterparts, trans people are 81% more likely to be unemployed. An LGBT health and wellbeing survey in 2021 found that 40% of respondents felt that their transness had a negative impact on their job prospects, and one in three employers outright told a 2018 survey that they’d be less likely to hire applicants that they knew were transgender. If

Chloe has found work, she probably has a low-paid job in customer service: she may work at a supermarket, in a care home or as a receptionist. These roles put her in daily contact with people who treat her in an ignorant, rude and even actively hostile manner. She is expected to respond with perfect calm, composure and politeness, and if she does not her job could be at stake. Abuse from coworkers and the public can be extremely upsetting and frightening, and I've spoken with lots of trans people whose experiences have outright forced them out of work (temporarily or otherwise).

That income (perhaps supplemented by disability benefit, crowdfunding or a form of sex work) will need to pay not only for food, bills and rent (for herself and maybe for any unemployed housemates), but also for the various extra costs associated with gender transition. Purchase of things like shaving equipment, beauty products, new clothing (it's wild how quickly your body can change shape during "second puberty") haircuts etc. is hardly unique to the trans experience, but the sudden appearance of these costs and their necessity as protection against severe discomfort and discrimination make them a real burden. Many trans women report that they wear makeup, jewellery and feminine clothing not just for their own happiness but because they experience abuse and threats of violence from strangers when they don't wear them. It's still common advice in trans circles that you should wear high heels to the doctor's office, because fitting cis people's expectations and stereotypes makes it easier to get healthcare from them. Additionally, if people wish to bypass the years-long waiting lists of the NHS for therapy and transition care then they must pay exorbitant sums for consultations, blood tests, hormone therapy, laser hair removal, facial surgery, top surgery and bottom surgery. These are out of the financial reach of a great many trans people, and so for the years she sits on a waiting list Chloe's only option may be spending a little money from each paycheck on DIY hormone therapy, something she will be taught to do safely by members of her community.

When she's actually on the job, Chloe faces possible harassment from both customers and managers. Surveys suggest that in 2021 two-thirds of employed trans people tried to avoid such harassment by hiding their trans identity (up from half in 2016). If she is early in her transition Chloe may "boymode" at work by dressing and acting as if she is a man, and if she is later in her transition she may "go stealth" by simply not disclosing her trans status. Workplaces that fail to accommodate trans people are so much the norm that a common joke amongst non-binary people is "my pronouns are they/them, but I'm at work right now so whatever". Around 60% of trans people experience harassment in the workplace, and when loud or violent incidents occur the response from management is often capitulation to anti-trans demands: for example I know several people whose workplaces have banned them from wearing pronoun pins "for their own protection". The result of such policy changes is usually an increased volume of harassment and mistreatment.

Chloe is not a passive victim though, she's getting organised. One way that trans people help support each other is through community mutual aid networks, and Chloe gives money and time to these when she can. Trans Aid Cymru, for example, facilitates a meal-share program and oversees direct redistribution of funds to help trans people pay for housing, bills, food, transport, medical care and other transition care. Chloe may also be active in her workplace trade union, in a community union like ACORN (the Cardiff branch of which is notorious for how disproportionately queer it is) or in a political organisation like the Welsh Underground Network (which in 2024 had a membership gender makeup of approximately a third men, a third women and a third non-binary). Across Wales, trans people like Chloe are out on picket lines in the mornings, marching in the streets in the afternoons and attending meetings in the evenings. Members of the community are essential to the functioning of a variety of different organisations, and they in turn are supported by a large number of other trans people.

Chloe is unfortunately rather likely to encounter a mix of misogyny and harassment in left-wing circles however, which may disillusion her with cis activists and cis-led activism. Transgender people tend to cluster together in organisations where their presence will not be questioned or challenged, specific "safe spaces" where they can get on with their organising work without unnecessary interruptions. Establishing a solid pro-trans stance and trans-inclusive culture is essential for any organisation looking to work with talented grassroots organisers like Chloe. By contrast, the anti-trans campaigners who congregate in and around leftist groups are notorious for how little they

contribute and how much they demand. When I ran communications for my union, many of our posts were liked by a woman who loved to yell about “men in dresses” on twitter... I often wondered how she’d feel if she found out that the activism she admired was done by people she hated.

This has never really been a question of whether trans people can be a part of the working class movement, it’s obvious that we already are. What’s in question is our future, and whether by overworking, underappreciating, ignoring and ostracising trans people the left will lose us. Chloe is not some sad, miserable, pitiful creature begging for scraps, nor is she a dangerous outsider who’s come to divide the left’s coalition. Whether you recognise it or not, Chloe is a member of the working class, your comrade in struggle, and she deserves your recognition and solidarity. So the next time someone tells you that trans issues (or “gender ideology”) are a “bourgeois indulgence” for “liberal academics” tell them to go fuck themselves; and if you see your own story in Chloe’s, don’t hesitate to make your voice heard in left-wing spaces: you have more right to be there than any of your critics.

This article owes a huge debt to the work being done by grassroots LGBT groups and research collectives like Trans Aid Cymru and the Trans Safety Network, because without the many community-led surveys that have been done in the last decade this article could not exist. In particular I want to shout out the essay “Transphobia is a Class Issue” which inspired me to write an essay of my own for the new context of Wales in 2025.

Key links:

<https://transsafety.network/posts/study-shows-trans-people-more-likely-live-deprived-areas/>

<https://www.lgbthealth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Trans-People-and-Work-Survey-Report-LGBT-Health-Aug-2021-FINAL.pdf>

<https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/article/1743007/number-of-trans-people-who-hide-their-identity-at-work-increasing>

<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/resources/lgbt-britain-trans-report-2018>

<https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/about-homelessness/about-lgbtqplus-homelessness/>

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[Y Seren Goch](#)

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