

LIVING LAB NORWAY



Women-led innovations in rural areas are often farm-based, and also involve social entrepreneurship of some kind; small-scale food production, rural tourism, health or education. Women are more likely than men to participate in on-farm diversified activities such as farm tourism and Green Care.

Many women innovators seem to have a life-style business without significant growth intentions. The choices and preferences of women innovators do not match the classic economic understanding of entrepreneurship very well, which implies various internal constraints—such as low self-confidence; perceived hostile environments—and external constraints—such as the legal system and social norms on women innovators.

Women face greater demands through screening and information requirements than men when raising capital. Public business fund managers believe it is less profitable to invest in or provide financial support to women than to men. Only 30% of the entrepreneurs in Norway are women. This is far below the average in OECD countries.

A larger proportion of women innovators are part-time entrepreneurs than among male innovators. Among the self-employed, part-time entrepreneurs make up 48% of the women innovators and 35% of the males.

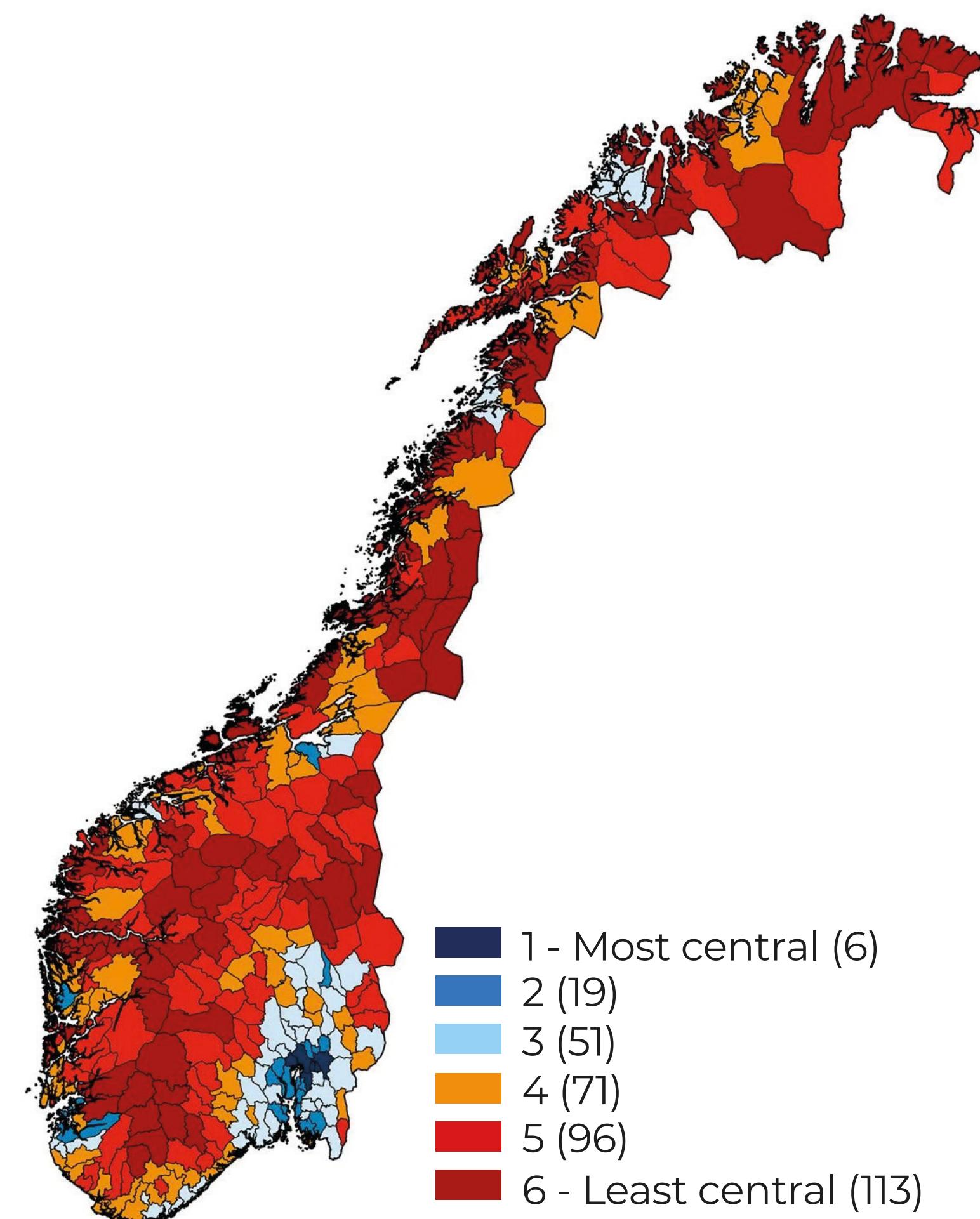
The governmental action plan has changed from a wide range of initiatives relevant to women innovation and entrepreneurship grounded in liberal feminist perspectives, to less varied initiatives merely focused on promoting equal access to funding, and further again to mainly evaluate the perceived quality of entrepreneurial projects when deciding potential support.

In Norway, even though the interest in becoming entrepreneurs or innovators is more or less the same among women and men, only 30 percent of persons becoming innovators are women, and the women's share is steadily reduced in the direction toward “lasting business going well and in growth”.

Women (rural, farming and fishing) have played leading roles in local food innovation in Norway and the Trøndelag region, by selling produce and innovative products at small-scale outlets such as farmers' markets. With shifting supply chains requiring larger producers to supply supermarkets, women's role in the region has become less prominent. This Lab looks at the innovation-related needs of rural women, to strengthen their

role in local food innovation, as this is a field of innovation that has shown to be of high interest to women in rural areas.

The 'Local Food Innovations' Living Lab is based on the different experiences and accumulated knowledge among active women innovators of different ages, roles and stages of enterprise and will strengthen the innovation processes of women within local food innovation and more generally, through addressing and developing measures to overcome various challenges and barriers to be identified by the living lab members themselves. In addition, stakeholders supporting sustainable women innovation in rural areas will be involved in the living lab processes.



Level of centrality at municipal level

Source: Høydahl (2020). Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development (2021)

The **activities in the lab** will largely be defined based on the women innovators' needs and what they think is important – both for their own part and for women innovators in rural Norway in general. We are still early in this process, but we have defined some overall points:

- Conduct workshops and facilitate discussions to come up with measures that will contribute to solutions to the challenges identified.
- Plan for experience sharing and mutual learning within the group, as well as network sharing.
- Connect the innovators to resources and networks that seem difficult for them to access.
- Invite relevant stakeholders in consultation with the women innovators. These will have different functions in the Lab: good tips and advice for the individual innovator/inspiration and motivation for the group as a whole/introduction of tools and examples of support in relevant areas/door openers to interesting networks (e.g. women leaders).
- Making use of the methods we are presented with via the main project, making the women familiar with them.
- Make the LL topics and interests visible through media, internet, and social media platforms to inspire others within local food production and other entrepreneurial activities regionally and nationally.



The **Trøndelag Living Lab participants** are all involved in one way or another in local food production. Through food, beverages, travel and tourism they contribute to the vibrancy of rural communities. From a business in the marine sector with fish oil, there is craft beer, bread, cakes and sweets, eggs, cheese and milk, cattle and sheep, heirloom grains, honey and potatoes. Some farms have accommodation, organise weddings and other events, host workshops, showcase textile galleries and offer guided salmon fishing.

The **stakeholders** are all in the local sectors of innovation, banking, and education, such as the County Administration in Trøndelag; Innovation Norway; Fremtidens Industri/Industries of the Future; Fosen Regional Council; Trondheim Municipality; and Norwegian University of Science and Technology. By participating in GRASS CEILING both rural women innovators and stakeholders have the potential to form networks and strengthen the roles of rural women innovators in Trøndelag.

