Identification of possible participants
Patients (18 -64 year-olds) identified with a primary diagnosis\(^1\), by electronic database search
\(n= 573 \) (prevalent – P) + 36 (new cases – NC)

Exclusion
Exclusion of patients with explained chronic fatigue
\(n= 63 \) (P) + 7 (NC)

Clinical revision
Exclusion of individuals who were no longer cases

Invitation to participate in the study
\(n= 510 \) (P) + 29 (NC)

No answer to invitation letter

Refusals

Subjects’ consent
Informed consent given
\(n=387 \) (P) + 17 (NC)

2\(^{nd}\) attempt by post

3\(^{rd}\) attempt by phone

Refusals/missing
\(n=123 \) (P) + 12 (NC)

Research Team

Data collection
Questionnaires sent to consenting individuals, by post, containing questions related to symptoms characterization, onset, duration, relation to activities, and co-morbid conditions

Data quality check
Completed questionnaires reviewed by central research team, for consistency and missing data

Cases of ME/CFS
Individuals complying with at least one of the study case definitions.
\(n= 265 \) (P) + 13 (NC)

Data entry
Completed questionnaires entered onto secured electronic database

Non-cases
Individuals with unexplained chronic fatigue who did not comply with at least one of the study case definitions
\(n= 122 \) (P) + 4 (NC)

Case ascertainment
Ascertainment of cases according to the study case definitions, based on an in-built electronic algorithm

Identification of possible participants
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\(n= 573 \) (prevalent – P) + 36 (new cases – NC)

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