Objectives This study aimed to estimate the prevalence of metabolic syndrome in Korean working population by types of work and find the change of inequality pattern in metabolic syndrome.

Methods We conducted a cross-sectional study in Korean adults using the third Korean National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (KNHANES III). 3288 workers over a period of 19 years were included. The prevalence odds ratios (PORs) of metabolic syndrome among representative types of works (manual vs non-manual) were estimated after stratification for age and sex by survey logistic regression.

Results The prevalence of metabolic syndrome in manual workers was higher than in non-manual workers (p<0.01). Manual workers had a statistically higher prevalence of metabolic syndrome than non-manual workers in those aged 50 and lower. However, the PORs favouring metabolic syndrome in manual workers significantly decreased with age.

Conclusions Our results suggest that the kind of work carried out by the subjects in the survey may be associated with the prevalence of metabolic syndrome. However, age interacts with the type of work in the prevalence of metabolic syndrome.