SC unemployment drops to lowest level in 13 years

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COLUMBIA — South Carolina's unemployment rate dropped again in April, down to 5.3 percent. It's the lowest level in 13 years. The national unemployment rate during April was 6.3 percent.

The state's unemployment rate was 5.5 percent in March.

The State Department of Employment and Workforce reported on Friday that there were about 114,000 people unemployed in the state during April. That's down more than 4,600 from the previous month.

Gov. Nikki Haley said that the lowest unemployment rate in 13 years is something all South Carolinians should be proud of.

"This kind of progress says a lot about our state, our workforce, and all the businesses that call South Carolina home that continue to grow and find success here," the Republican governor said.

But a spokesman for state Sen. Vincent Sheheen, Haley's Democratic opponent in this fall's election, said that South Carolinians are still struggling.

"The economic reality in South Carolina is that average family income has shrunk under Governor Haley, a staggering number of people have dropped out of the workforce entirely, and families are struggling with falling wages," said Sheheen's campaign manager, Andrew Whalen.

The number of people working in the state in April reached an all-time high with about 2,050,000 employed.

"The number of working people has increased for nine consecutive months, and South Carolina continues to reach historic employment levels," said Cheryl Stanton, executive director of the Department of Employment and Workforce.

The department said that nearly 36,000 people have found work since April of last year.

The seasonally adjusted increase in employment from March to April was led by gains in manufacturing, which added 1,800 jobs, followed by transportation and utilities, which added 1,600 and government, where an additional 1,300 people were working. About 600 fewer people were working in financial services in the state in April than in March.

Since April 2013, professional and business services added 9,500 jobs, tourism added 9,100 and manufacturing about 7,300. Financial services lost 1,000 jobs during the past year.

The Greenville area led in job growth during the past year, adding 7,900 jobs. The Columbia area added 6,700 while the Charleston area added 5,100. The largest percentage job growth during the past year, more than 4 percent, was in the Anderson area, which added 2,700 jobs.