



First-time voters Tatiana Ortiz, 19, Isabella Ortega, 20, and Ashlyn Watson, 19, from left, head home after casting their votes at Iglesia Pentecostal Unida Latin Americana in Orange County. (Sofia Sutter/Special to the Orlando Sentinel)

First-time voters want their generation heard | 10:13 a.m.

College roommates Tatiana Ortiz, 19, Isabella Ortega, 20, and Ashlyn Watson, 19, walked to their car with smiles on their faces and "I Voted Today" stickers in hand after leaving an Orange County precinct Tuesday morning.

The trio of first-time voters changed their voter registrations from Broward County to Orange so they could vote in person. They were worried if they voted by mail there was a chance their ballots would not be counted.

"There's going to be issues," Ortega said. "They've been setting fire to them, they're been losing them through the mail trucks. So I'd rather be for sure counted in a place."

As first-time voters, the three said they felt it was important to have their voices heard.

"We wanted to vote and make our voice heard on certain issues, both locally and nationally, with all the amendments that are on the ballot and being potentially passed," Ortiz said. "And so we just really wanted to make sure that our generation was being heard."

The roommates all voted for Kamala Harris and were in agreement that her viewpoints on social and economic issues were "very reflective of human decency."

Ortega said she also appreciated how Harris' campaign reached out to younger voters.

"I also kind of felt seen by her campaign, and she's really trying to push towards the younger generation, which I don't see from a lot of the other candidates, at least," she said. "So I really saw that they're actually trying to get our vote and not actually ignore us."

The young women all rated their first voting experience a "10 out of 10," because of how easy it was.

"It was really close by, super easy, super simple," said Watson, a University of Central Florida student. "And if we have the opportunity and the ability to vote, why not?"

Sofia Sutter - Special to the Orlando Sentinel - UCF Nicholson School student

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